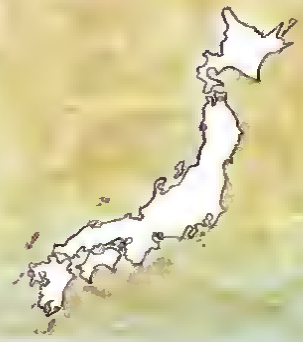
Itihasa 1

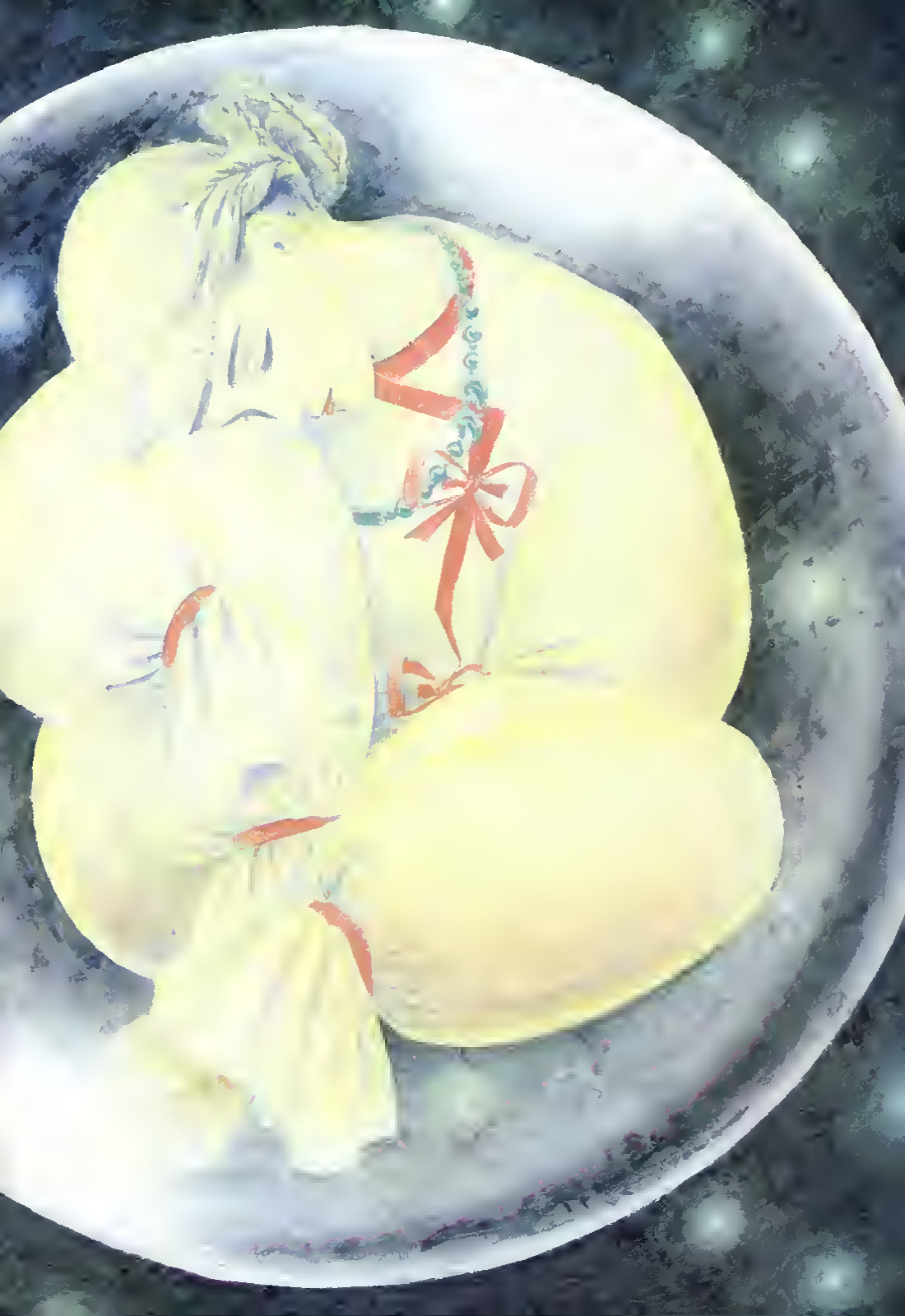
Wakako Mizuki

There are questions
that can make you go mad
if you keep searching for
the answer.



Why am I here?

Where did
I come from and
where am I going...?

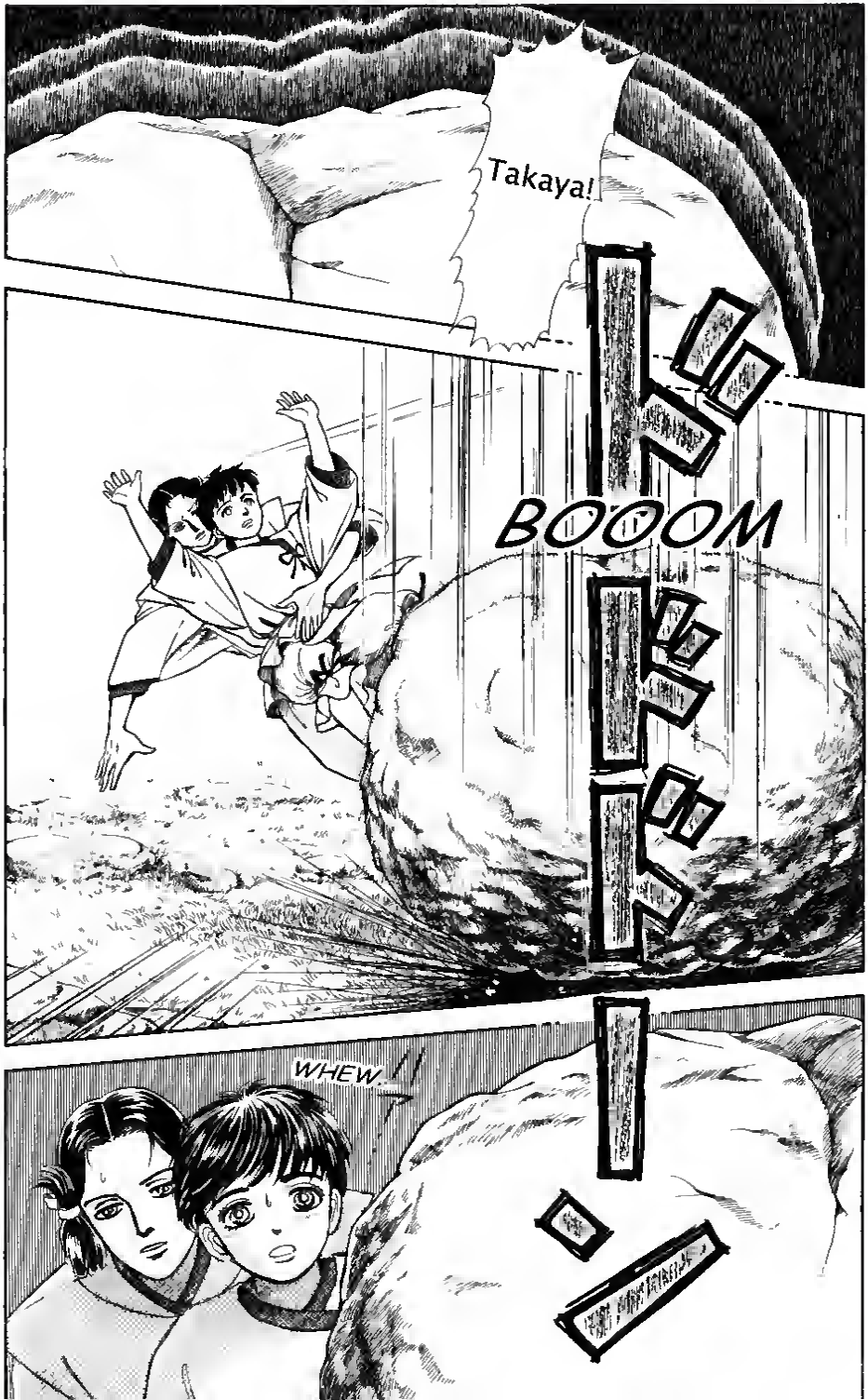


Itihasa
Part I: A Land Bearing the Names of the Gods

People love each other
in order to forget
these questions.

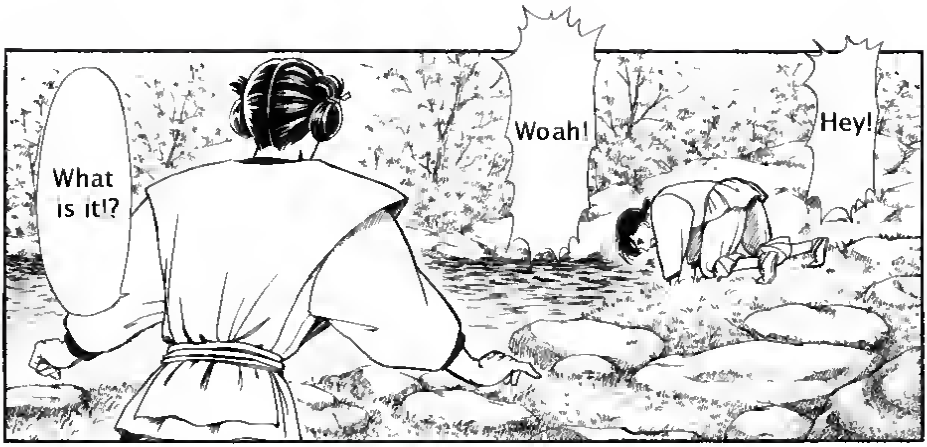
They call on the gods
to run away from
these questions.

You're mastering the subtle intervals and vocalization of the mantras.
That's it! Good, Takaya.
PEEK
Oh ...!


Takaya!
BOOOM
WHEW

You were trying to lift the rock with your own power!
Aha-ha...
Whad-daya mean "ahaha" !?
That's what the mantra is for!
Stay in tune with the vibrations of the rock!
The rock moves by your will, but not by your power! The power is in the rock itself!
This is a first.
I can't believe Aohiko's shouting... Sniff...
Mantras are the sacred wisdom given to us by the gods that cannot be seen.
If you recite them with a half-hearted attitude, you could wind up dead like you almost did just now!

Wait!
Ao-
hiko!
Takaya!
Over
here!
Do
you
hear
that?
You
can
hear
some-
thing?
Yeah!
Listen,
crying.


What is it!?
Woah!
Hey!

A baby!

Well, first we've got to pull it onto the bank.

What should we do?

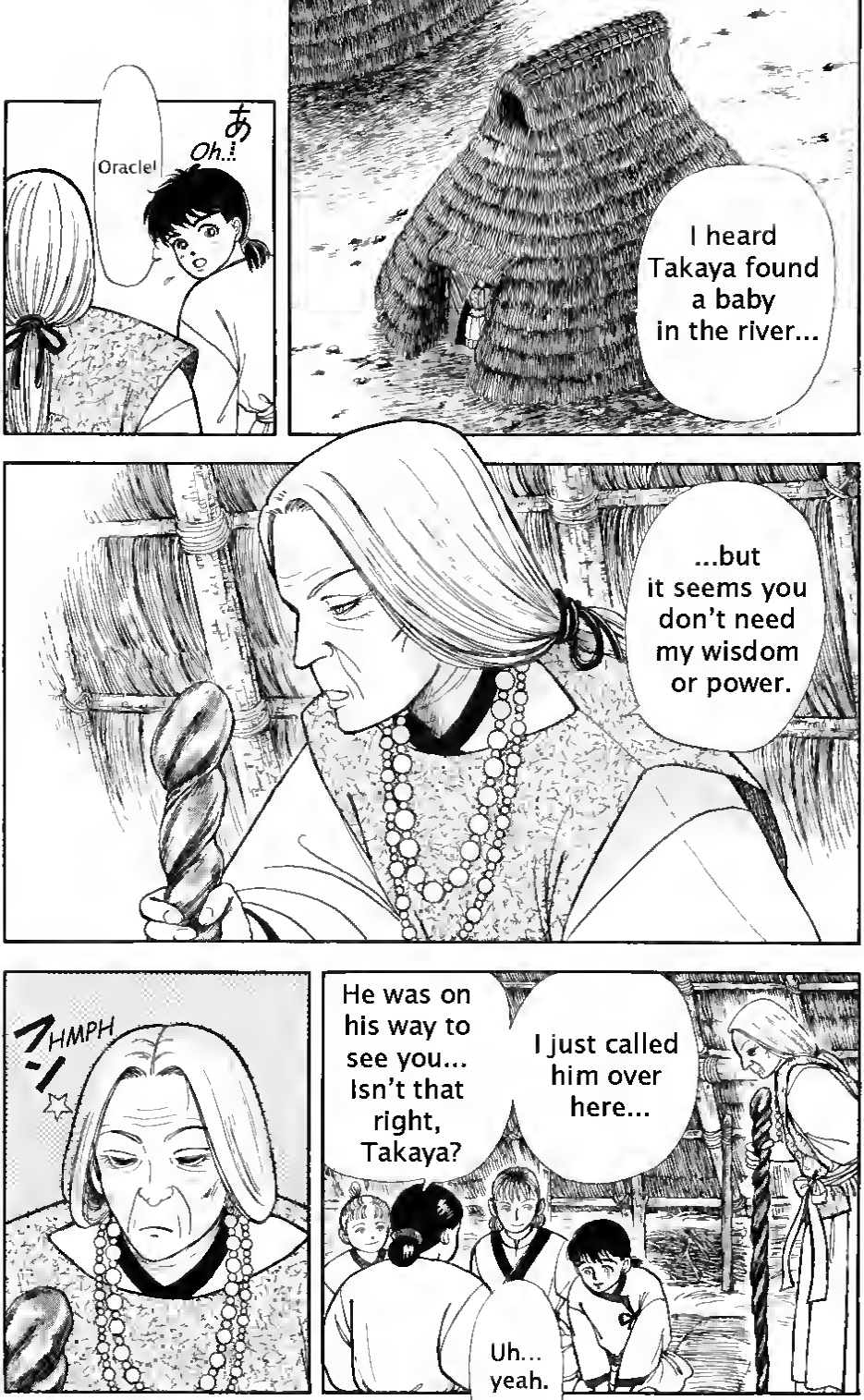
Its voice is like a mos-quito's whine... You have good ears.

Lift it out already.
Careful
I found it, so it's mine, right?
Hey, Takaya!
My baby!
It can't hold its head up yet.
It's mine!
You don't say.
I don't produce any milk.
...But it's very weak. We've got to get it warm and nursing right away...
The neck is alright ...
I-is it okay?

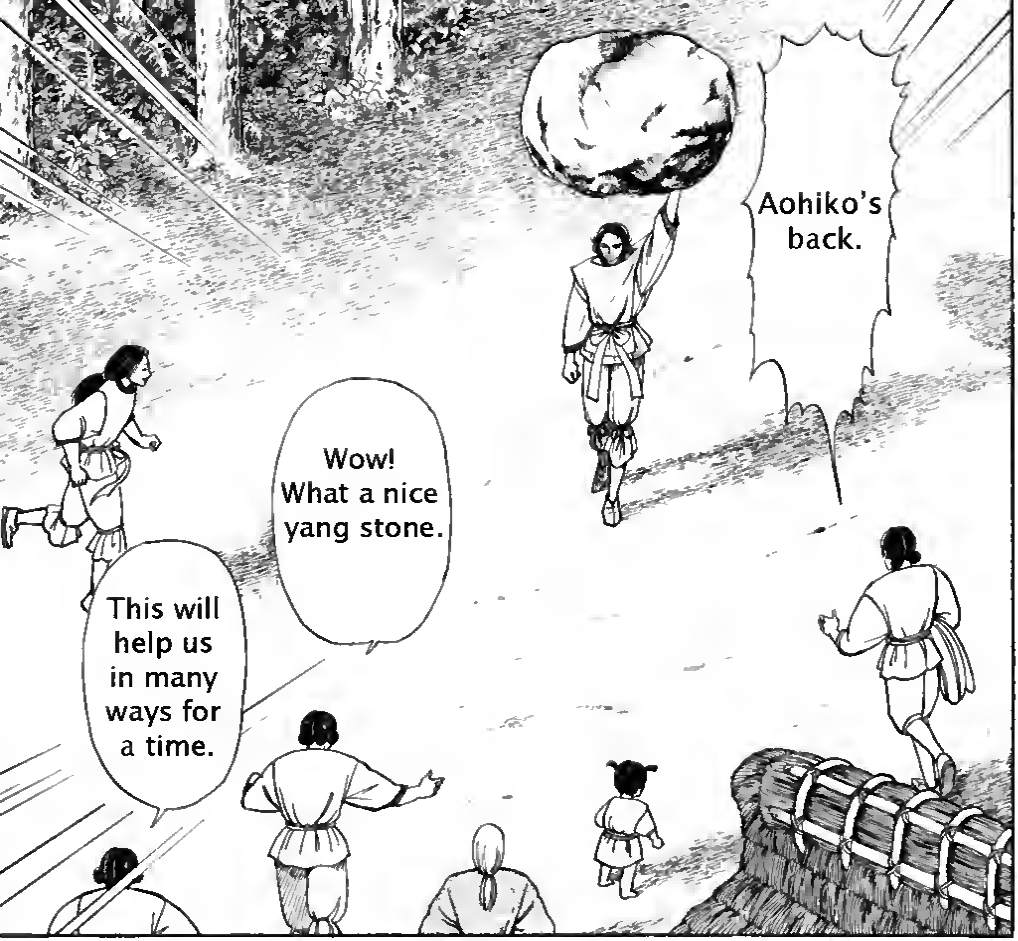
Watch where you're going!
Got it!
Okay!
Show it to the Oracle first. We don't want to get on her bad side.
That yang stone is going to come in handy.
Go on ahead and ask for everyone's advice for the baby.
I found it!
It's my baby!
HUFF

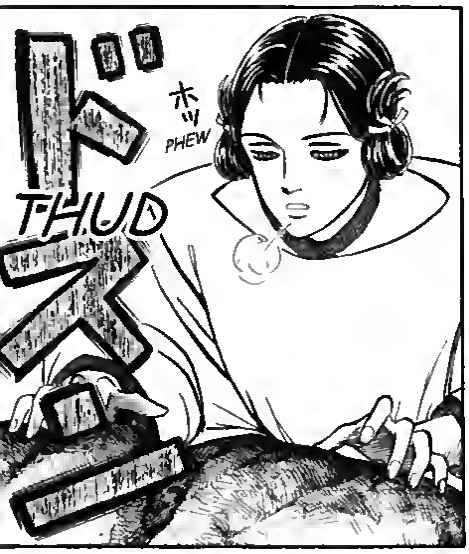
ヘ⊕▽⊕ゆ≡回ム
ヘ⊕▽⊕ゆ≡回ム
○『◎回≈▽⊕

Author's note: Writing did not exist at this time (about 12,000 years ago, around the end of the Ice Age). Imagine that I am translating what they are saying into modern form.

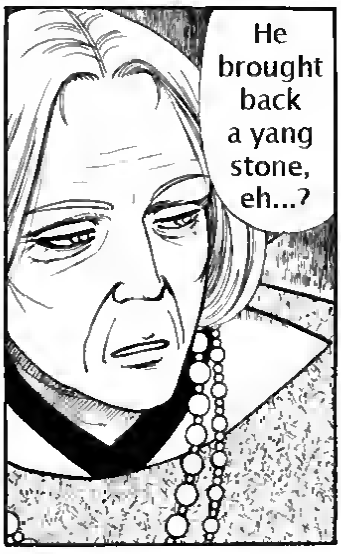

あ
Oh...!
Oracle!
I heard Takaya found a baby in the river...
...but it seems you don't need my wisdom or power.
HMPH
He was on his way to see you... Isn't that right, Takaya?
I just called him over here...
Uh... yeah.

Oracle ...
Its body is... going cold...
Hey! Stop it!
Takaya's such a dummy!
WHISPER WHISPER
ヒソヒソ
Not even an oracle can save it.
That baby is a goner.
Please save it, Oracle!
Save it!
It was wrapped in a red cloth.
They were hoping it would be rescued.
What kind of heartless parents would throw their newborn into the river...?

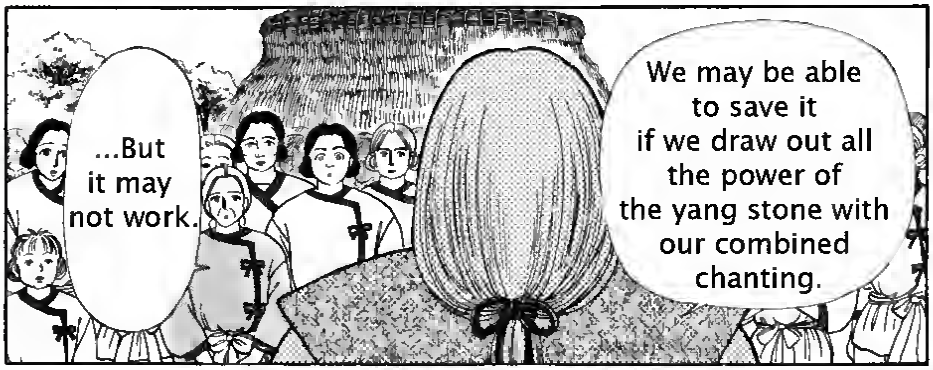

Aohiko's back.
Wow! What a nice yang stone.
This will help us in many ways for a time.


THUD
PHEW

If we're going to do this, let's start while it's still light.

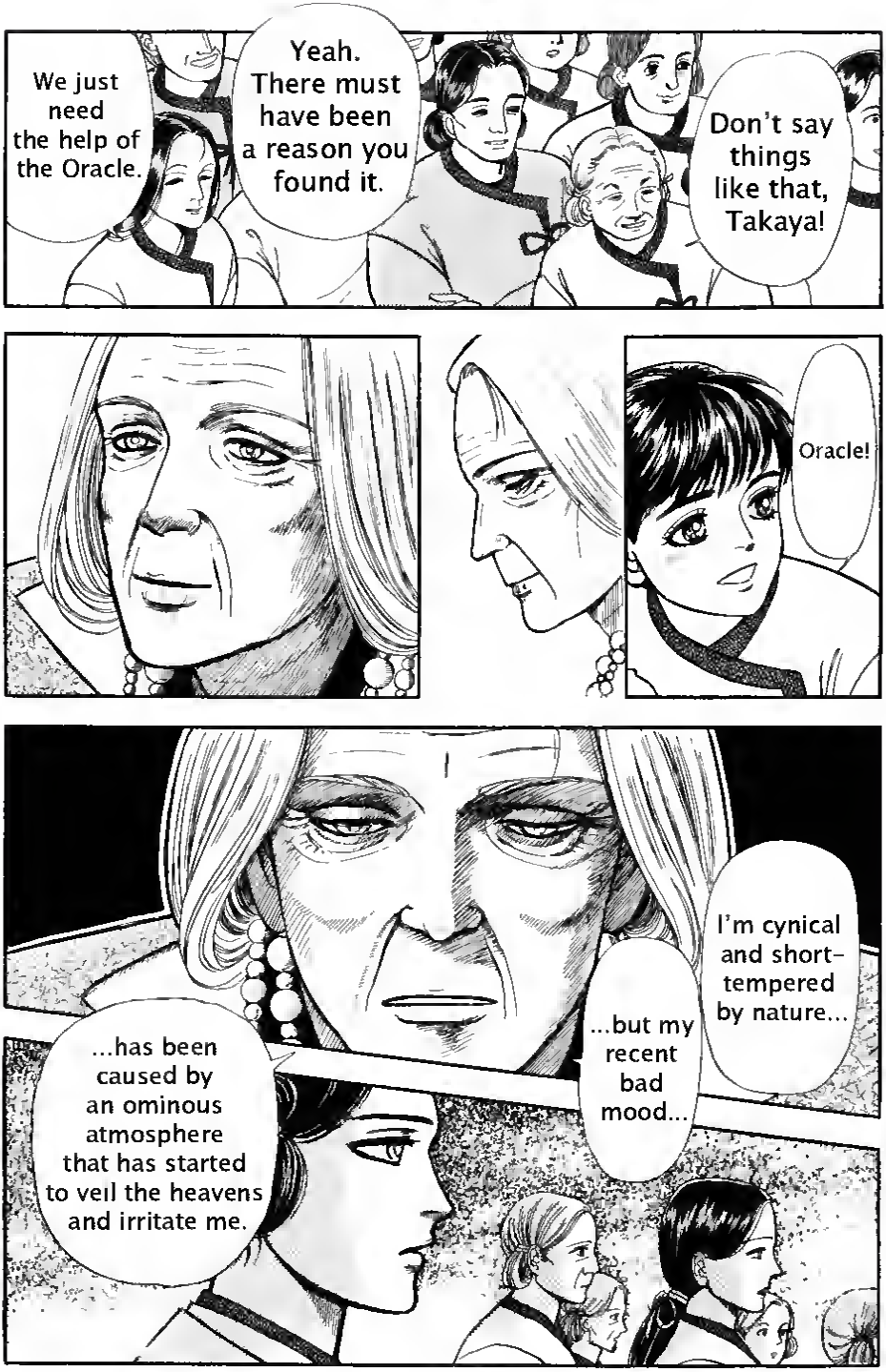

He brought back a yang stone, eh...?

Takaya found a dying baby in the river.
Gather round!

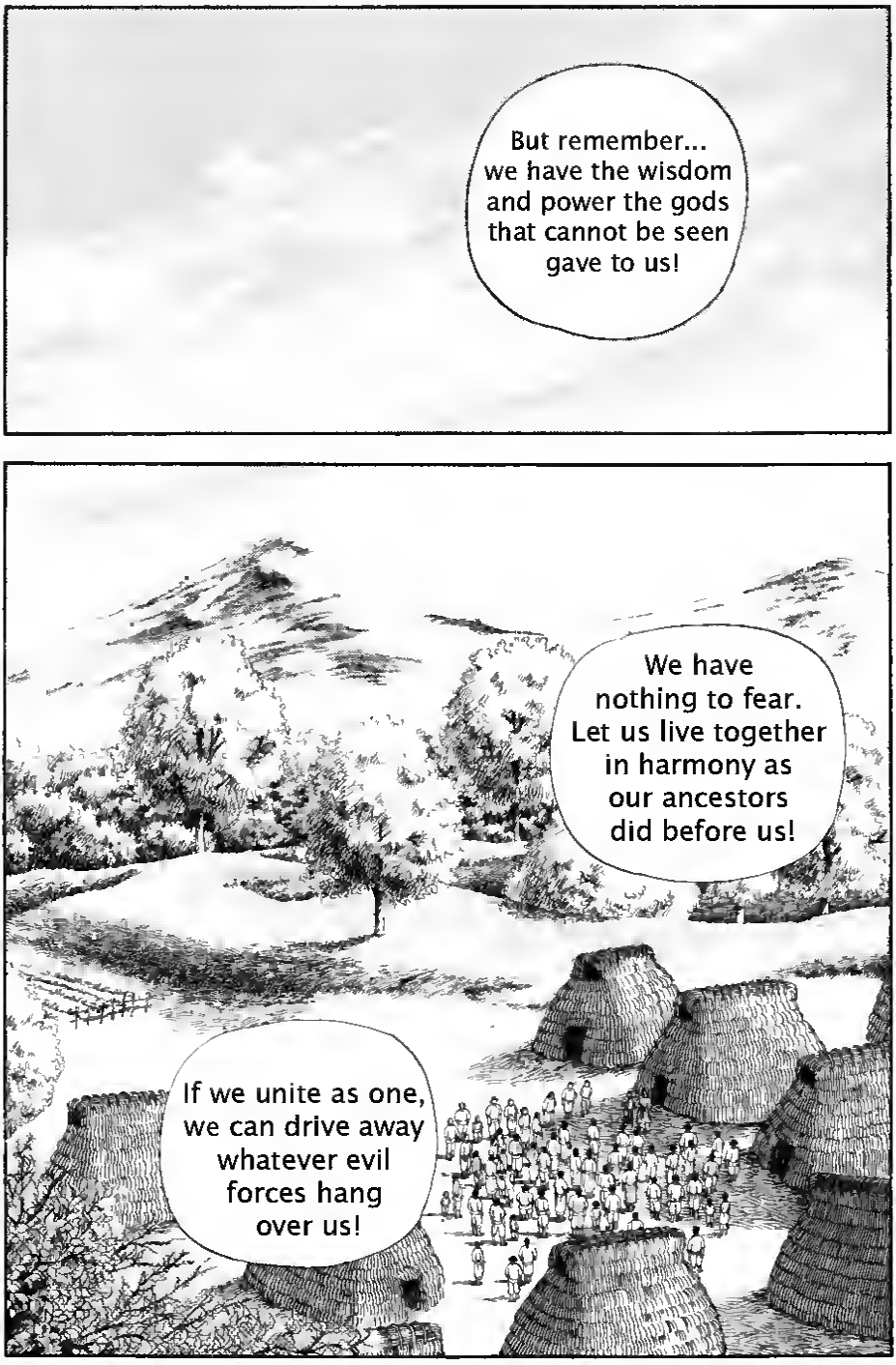

...But it may not work.
We may be able to save it if we draw out all the power of the yang stone with our combined chanting.

Don't worry. Wh-when I'm older, I'll find lots of yang stones like Aohiko.

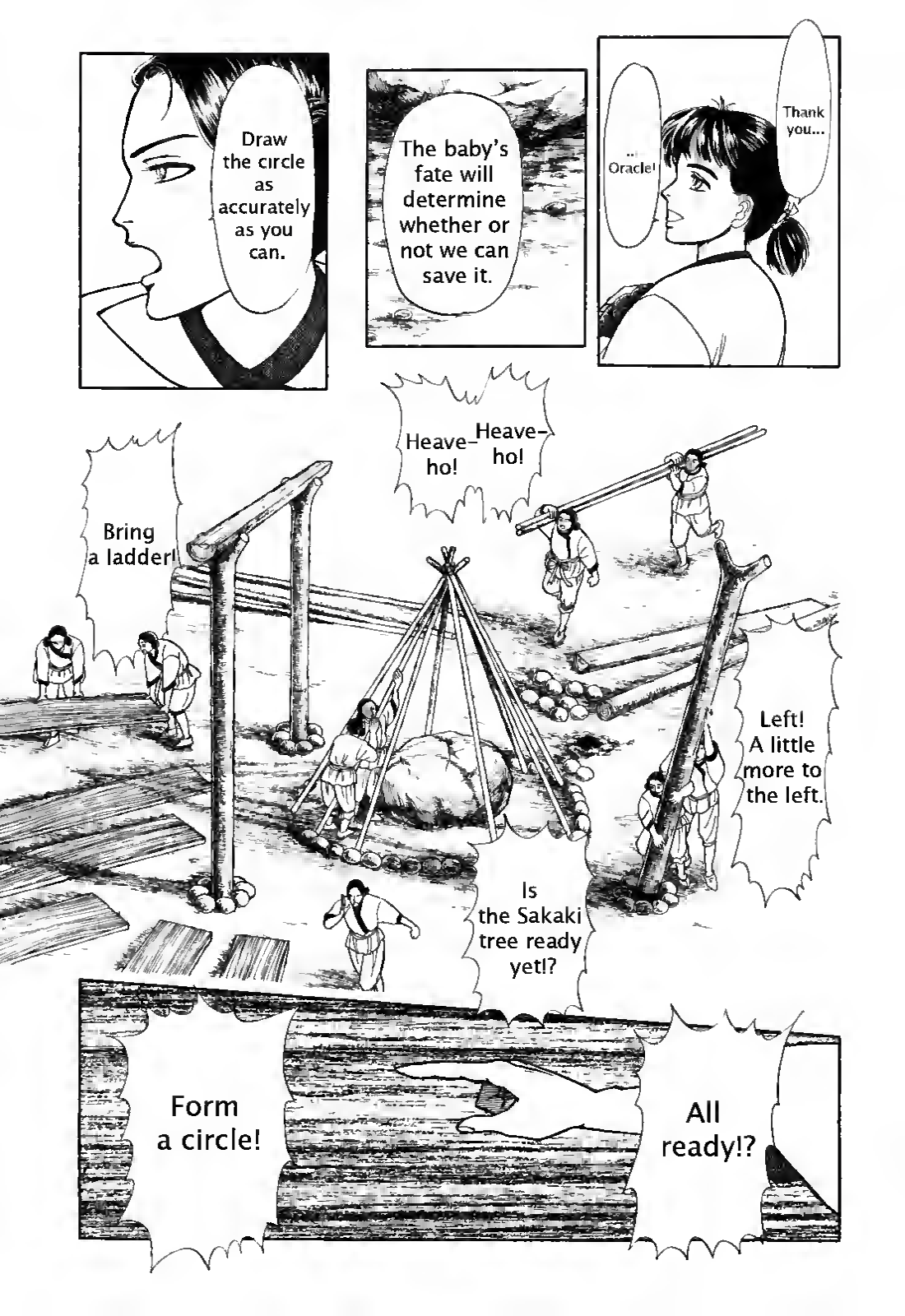
What do you want to do?
CHATTER CHATTER

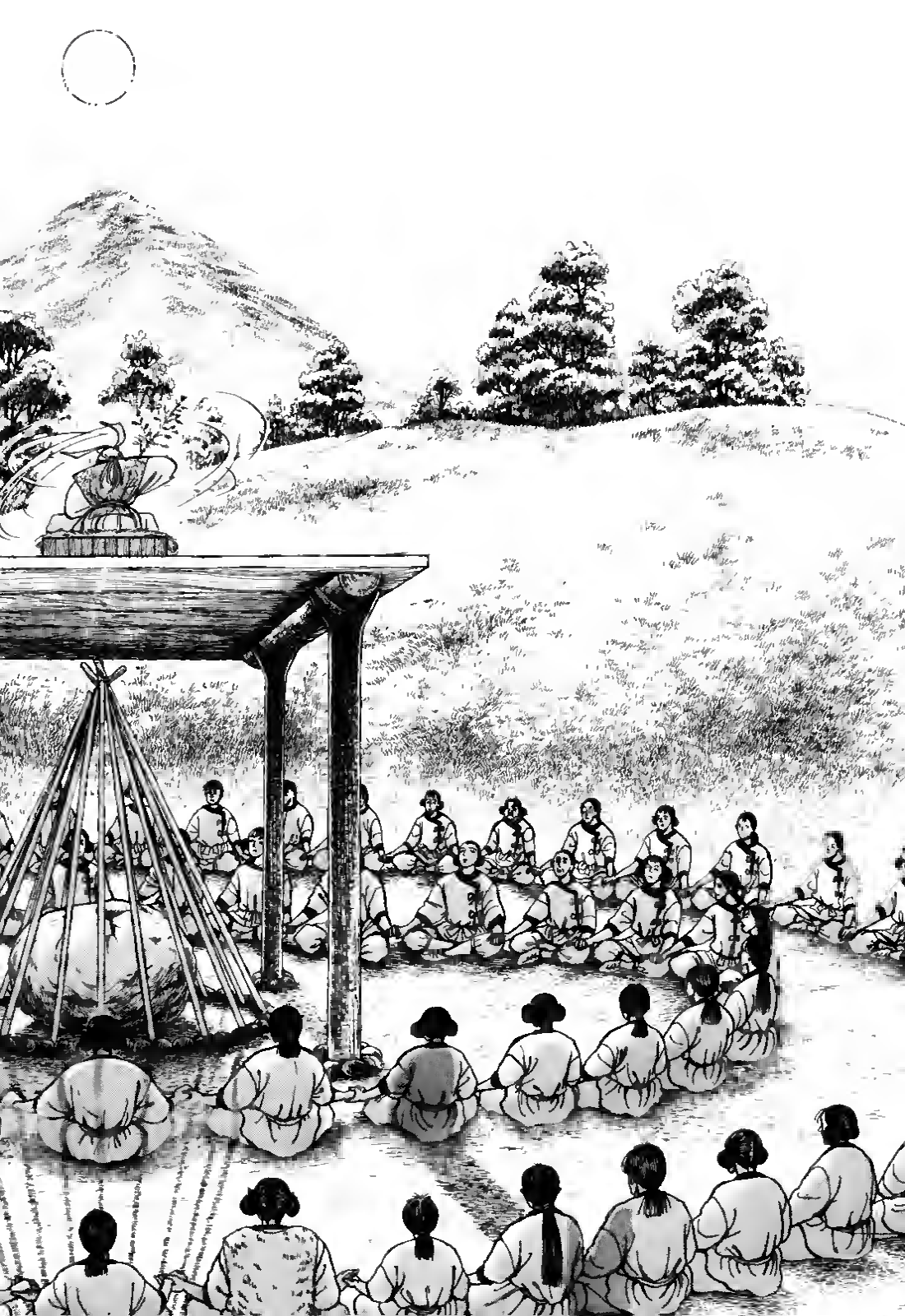

We just need the help of the Oracle.
Yeah. There must have been a reason you found it.
Don't say things like that, Takaya!
Oracle!
I'm cynical and short-tempered by nature...
...but my recent bad mood...
...has been caused by an ominous atmosphere that has started to veil the heavens and irritate me.

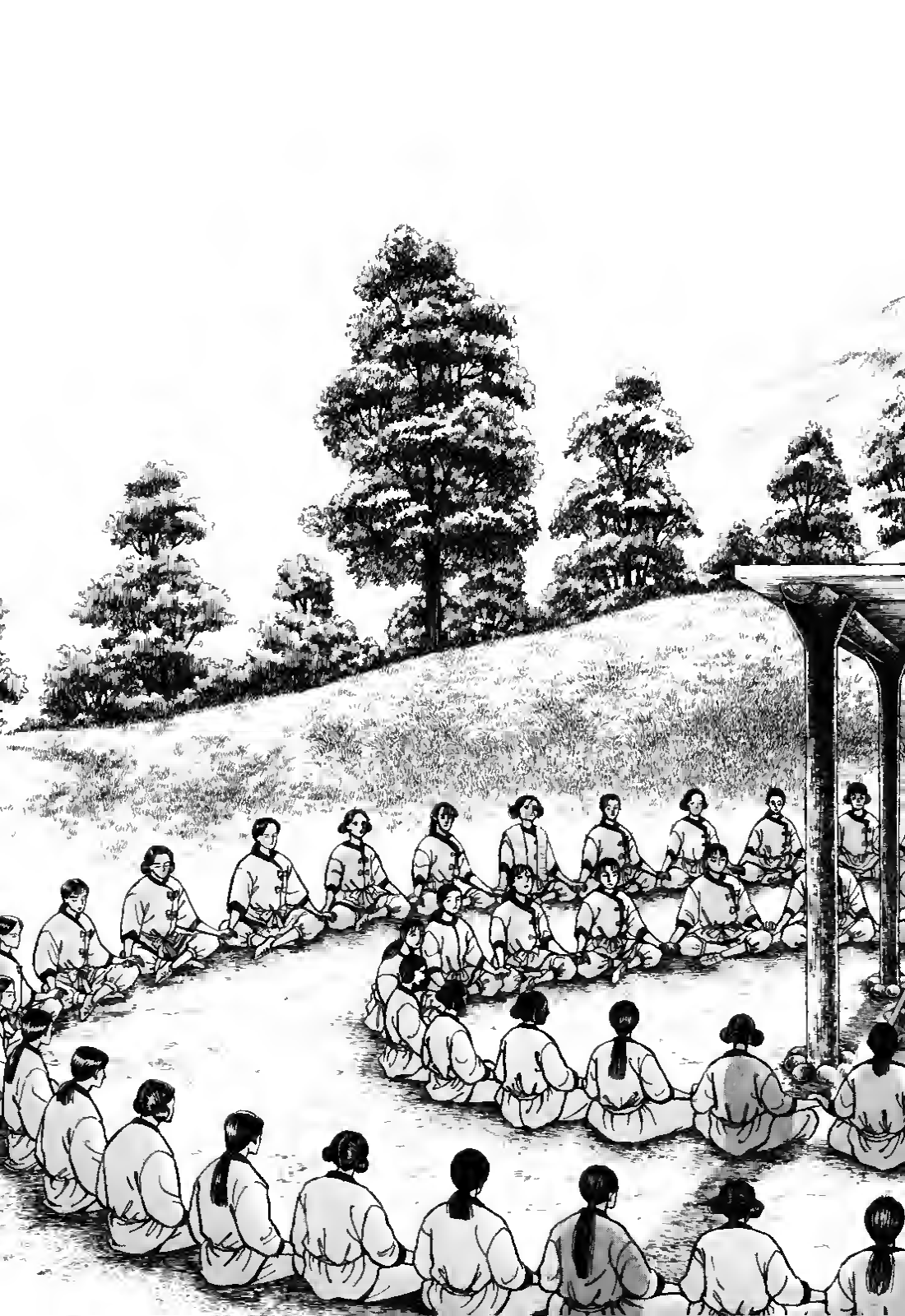
Listen carefully!
I have never told you before, but this was foretold by the Great Oracle two generations ago.
The gods that can be seen!?
She said... the two great continents will be reduced to dust and then, after a great flood, the gods that can be seen will appear in foreign lands everywhere, and the world will fall into chaos.
The time has come...
Foreign lands across the ocean?
Did she say the gods that can be seen!?
There was a great flood about a hundred years ago.
Something...
Something is beginning.


But remember... we have the wisdom and power the gods that cannot be seen gave to us!
We have nothing to fear. Let us live together in harmony as our ancestors did before us!
If we unite as one, we can drive away whatever evil forces hang over us!

Soiya!
Yeah!
Make ready for the chanting of the mantra!
All right!
Let's save this baby!
Soiya!


Draw the circle as accurately as you can.
The baby's fate will determine whether or not we can save it.
... Oracle!
Thank you...
Heave-ho!
Heave-ho!
Bring a ladder!
Left! A little more to the left.
Is the Sakaki tree ready yet!?
Form a circle!
All ready!?





Soiya
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✡☆⊕卑天罪◎

「〃〇△回◈⊹

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Waah!
It worked!!
Yaaayy!

Yaay!
My baby!
Bring the ladder!
My baby!
WAAH
WAAH
Hurry and give it some milk!
あはははは
AHAHAHAHAHA
What this baby really needs is a mother.
Is Takaya going to become a father at age seven!?
Ha ha ha ha!
But I found it.

That's very sweet, but...
I just need milk... I can do it!
I can do it!
Forget it, Takaya!
I'll take good care of it!
No!!
You're all fools!
You ...

Aohiko's such a softy with Takaya.
You want a family, don't you?
The fact that he's a lousy student just makes him cuter.
His father and mother both died when he was still very young
Takaya's all alone, isn't he?
Toko ...
*Inspira-tion...
The baby's name came to me ...
Did you say something, Oracle?

* Inspiration: Spiritual insight

It's Toko because ...
... "Ta-ka-ya" is all "a" sounds. "To-o-ko" is all "o" sounds.
They go well to-gether.
Oracle!
I will!
Bring her up as your sister!
Now that I've named her, she is my respon-sibility.

尊敬
-RESPECT-
That's why she's the Oracle.
Hm!? Oh. She's right. It's a girl.
Wait ...
My ...
... sister !?
If that's what you'd like, Oracle.
Agh! You got that, everyone? Raise the baby as Takaya's sister.
Hmph!
Just baby-sitting is hard work.
Raising a baby is hard work.
Hard work!
You're the reason it's hard!
Y-yeah.
That's great, Takaya!

G-girls seem so fragile. I'm scared...
What's the matter? You were so excited.
Here, take the baby.
O-okay.
あはははは AHAHAHAHA
Really !?
Girls are stronger than boys when they're babies.
My sister...
But remember...
...raising a baby is far more difficult than you think.
If it's too hard, don't be stubborn. Just tell me.
Some things are too difficult, no matter how hard you try.
Got it!

You're a very lucky girl! You were found by me and saved by us all.

My sister, wrapped in a red cloth.

It is your destiny to live.

Heaven and Earth,
protect this small life...

Toko!

To-ko!
Time to head back!
Takaya!
Hey, Takaya. Do you remember what the Oracle said seven years ago?
H-huh !?
I thought you were going to the river today.

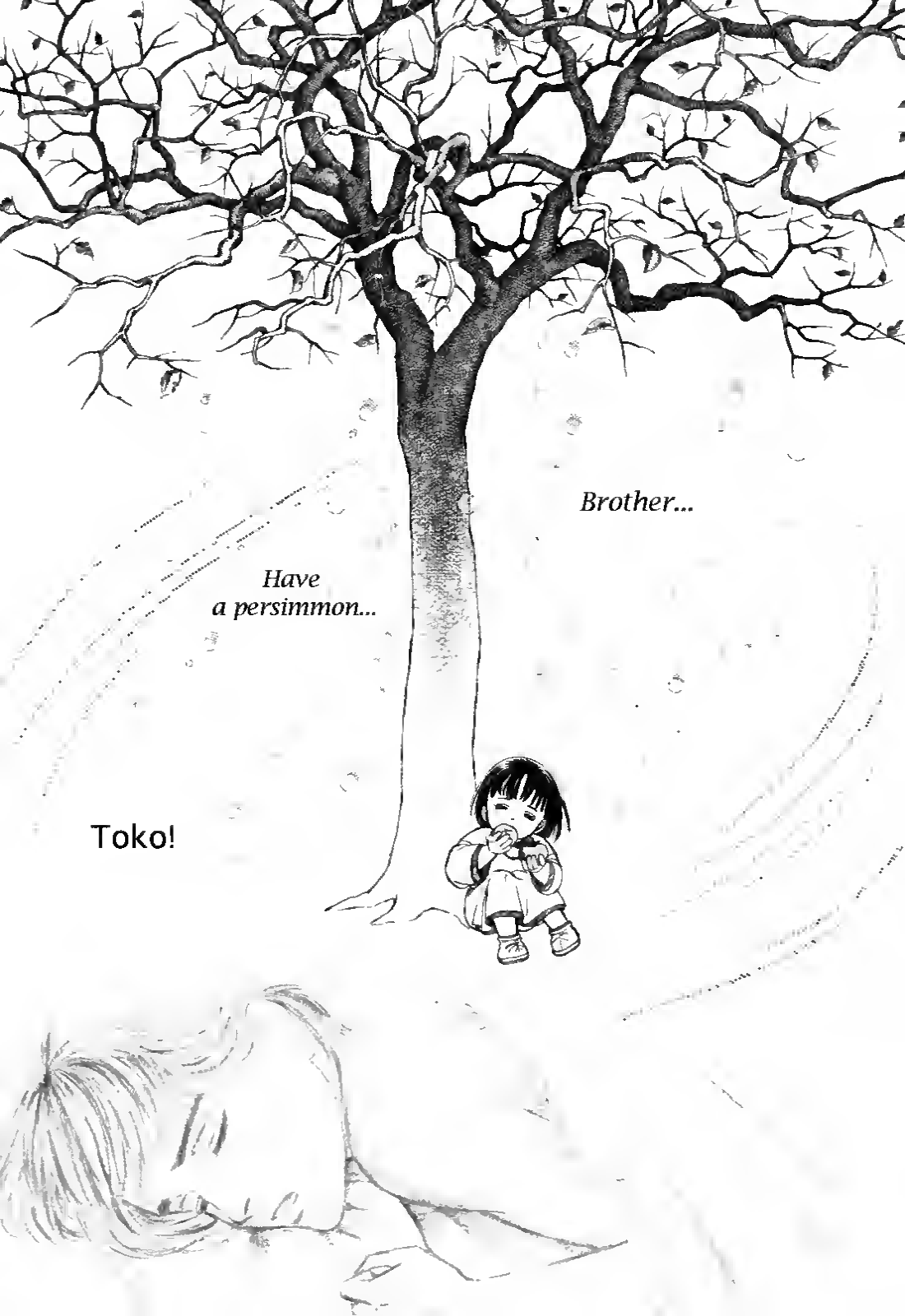
SHH
Back when you found Toko.
Seven years ago?
Why do you ask?
What if she hears you!?
That thing she said... about the gods that can be seen appearing in foreign lands and the world falling into chaos.
Ippei!
Save it for later. Help me look for Toko.
So about those rumors ...
I remember. There have been lots of rumors since then...

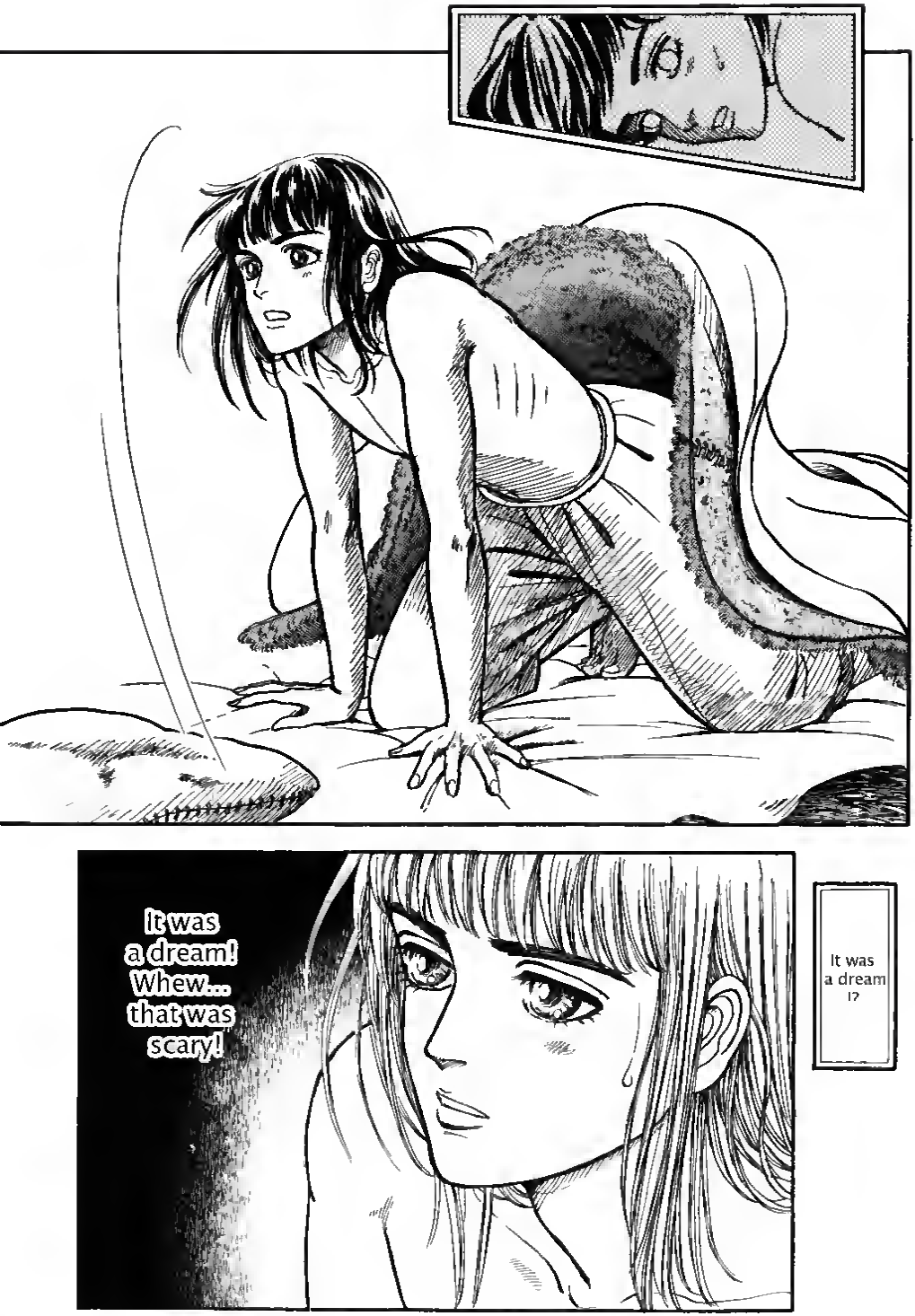
About those rumors ...
About those rumors ..
About those rumors ...
They say the gods are crossing the sea from the south and headed this way.
They say the gods kidnap children.
Children !?
You guys ...
...are acting strange ...
They call it being "spirited away"...
The gods kidnap them.

HWOO
Takaya!
Ugh!
Hey!
Takaya!
What!?
What do you think the gods that can be seen look like?
What's going on!?
Taka-ya!
Taka-ya!
What do they look like?
What do they look like?
Taka-ya!

Huh
!?
HEE
HEE
HEE
HE
HE
HE
HE

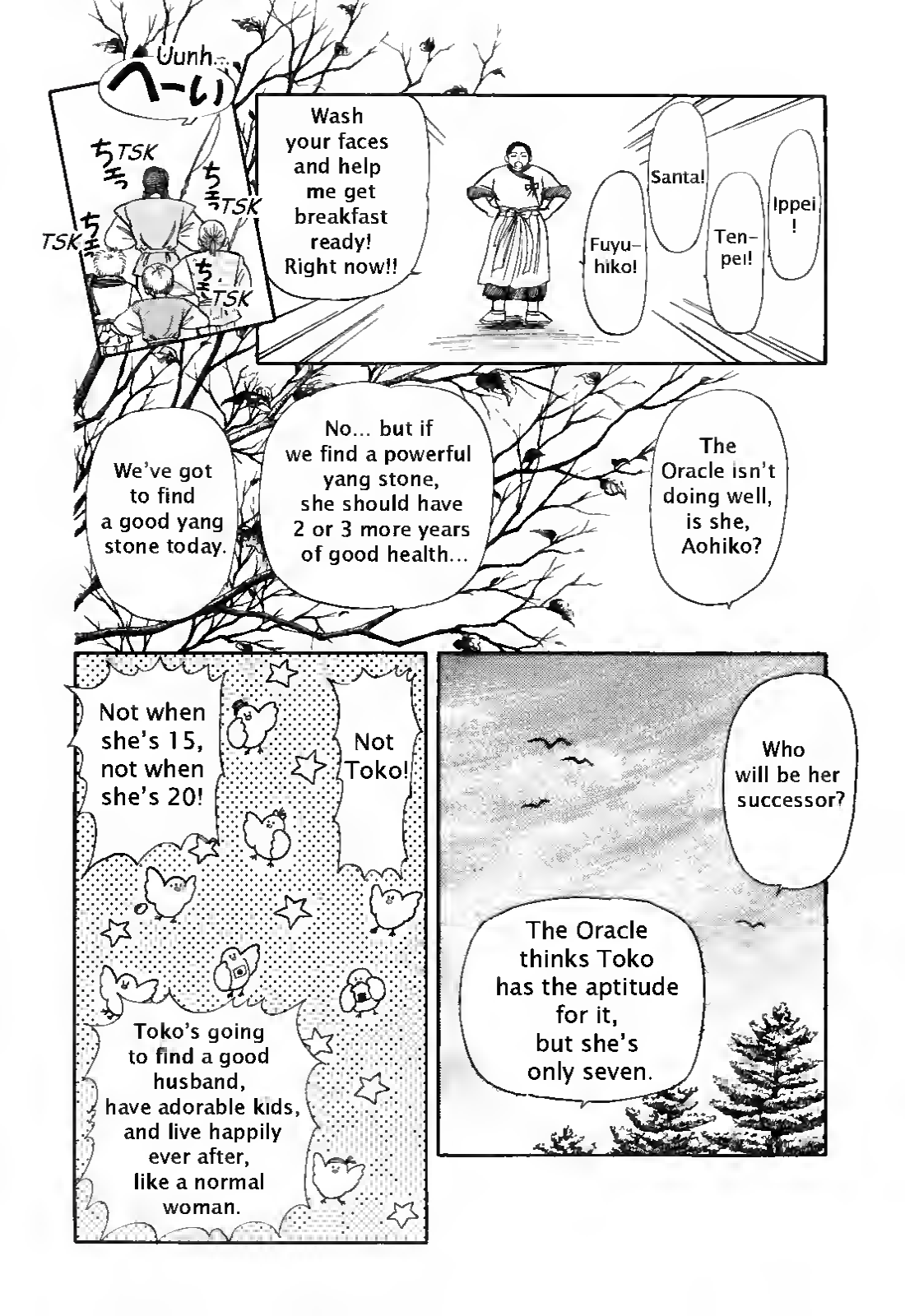
Toko will die!
!!
Die!
Toko!
Where are you!?
Toko!

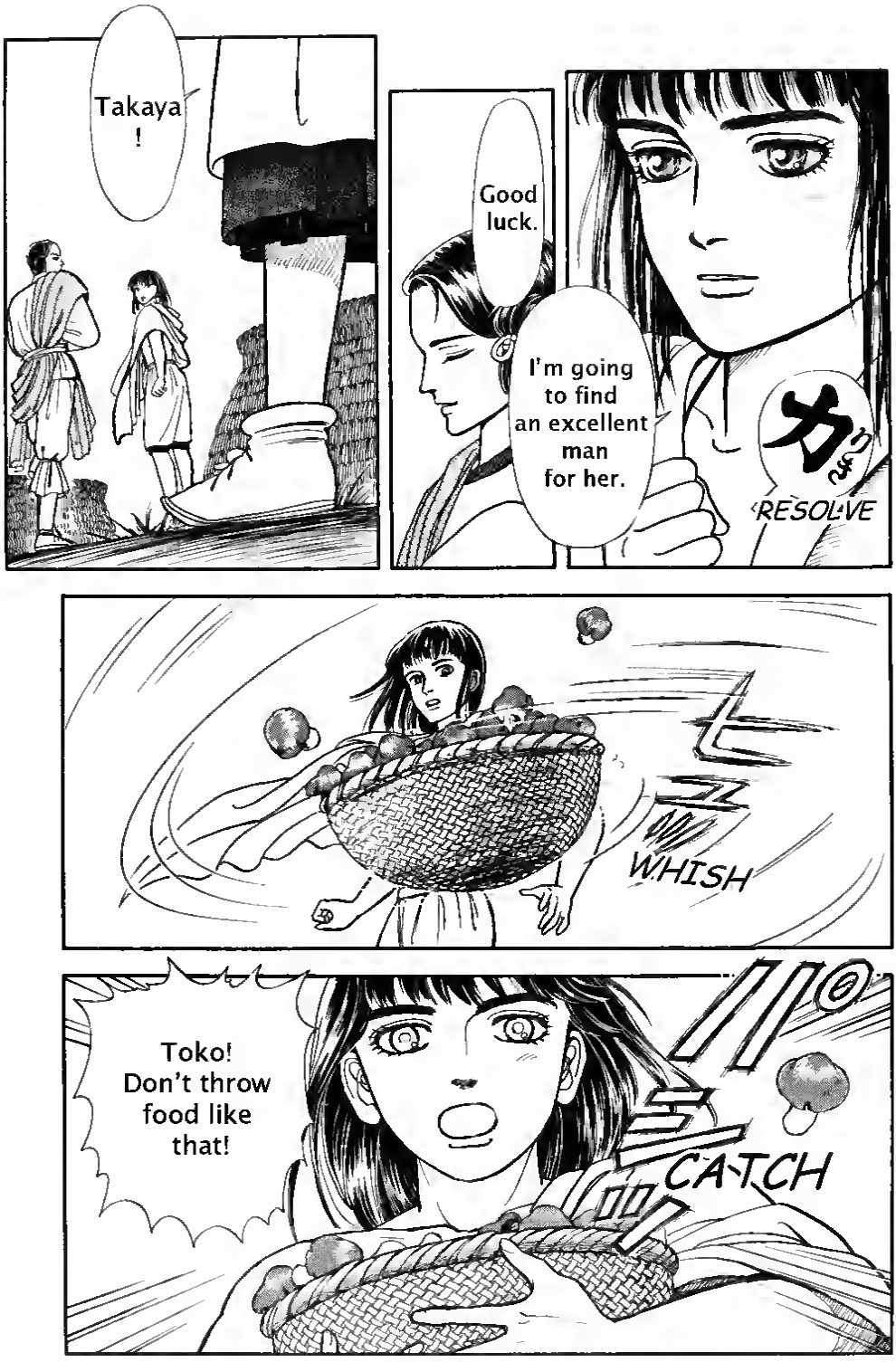

Brother...
Have a persimmon...
Toko!


It was a dream! Whew... that was scary!
It was a dream !?

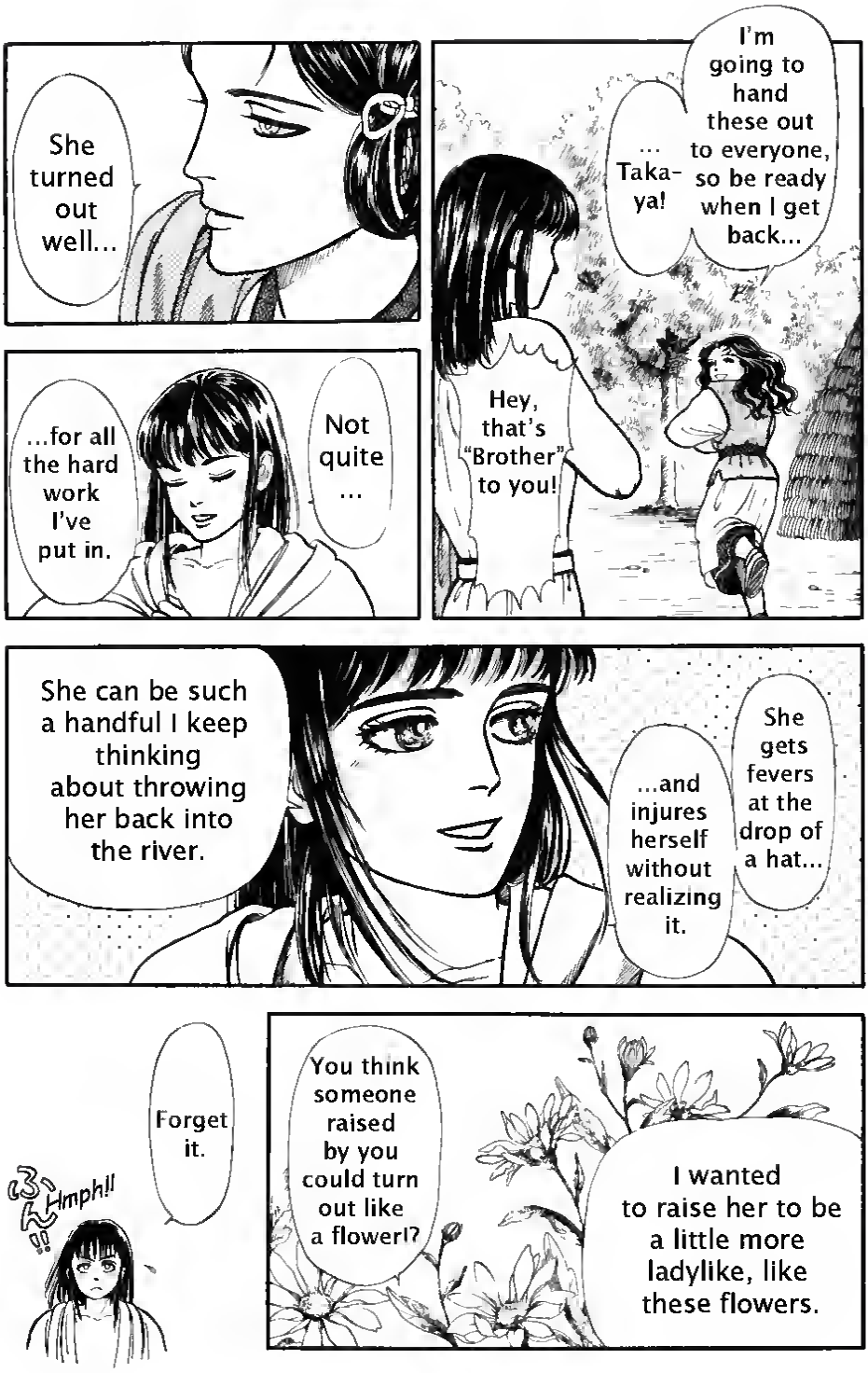
Auntie ...
Have you seen Toko around?
She got up early and went into the mountains with a basket.
It's a rebellious age.
For some reason, she got cheeky when she turned seven. I can't control her anymore.
That girl is an expert at gathering nuts and mushrooms.
Even though she is only seven, she works like an adult.
I told her not to go into the mountains alone.
Brrr...
ちべ
Ack!
Oh!
Aohi-ko!
Did those rumors about kids being spirited away get to you?

Well ...
I had this weird dream ...
It was just a random dream, but...
A dream!?
くしゅん
A-CHOO
I don't care how worried you are, put some clothes on! You're going to catch a cold.
It's nice out today. Let's go fishing!
Takaya!
Bring Toko too.
ぜ! Fishing!
There's no point if you and Toko aren't going.
Tsk!
No point!
?
あめ!
Uhhh..
BA-DUMP BA-DUMP
Today I'm going with Aohiko to look for a yang stone, so you go on without me.


Uunh...
ヘーい
TSK
Wash your faces and help me get breakfast ready! Right now!!
Fuyu-hiko!
Santa!
Ten-pei!
Ippei!
We've got to find a good yang stone today.
No... but if we find a powerful yang stone, she should have 2 or 3 more years of good health...
The Oracle isn't doing well, is she, Aohiko?
Not when she's 15, not when she's 20!
Not Toko!
Toko's going to find a good husband, have adorable kids, and live happily ever after, like a normal woman.
Who will be her successor?
The Oracle thinks Toko has the aptitude for it, but she's only seven.


Takaya !
Good luck.
I'm going to find an excellent man for her.
RESOLVE
WHISH
Toko! Don't throw food like that!
CATCH

We've had a great harvest this season.
Don't talk back to me!
I knew you'd catch it!
Let's go look for the yang stone now.
Yesterday you said I could come along. Remember?
Mm...
I was so excited I couldn't sleep last night.


She turned out well...
I'm going to hand these out to everyone, so be ready when I get back...
... Taka-ya!
Hey, that's "Brother" to you!
...for all the hard work I've put in.
Not quite ...
She can be such a handful I keep thinking about throwing her back into the river.
...and injures herself without realizing it.
She gets fevers at the drop of a hat...
You think someone raised by you could turn out like a flower!?
I wanted to raise her to be a little more ladylike, like these flowers.
Forget it.
Hmph!!

Once we got
past each difficulty,
it was like nothing
had happened...

As long as
I could see
Toko's smile,
I was always
so happy.

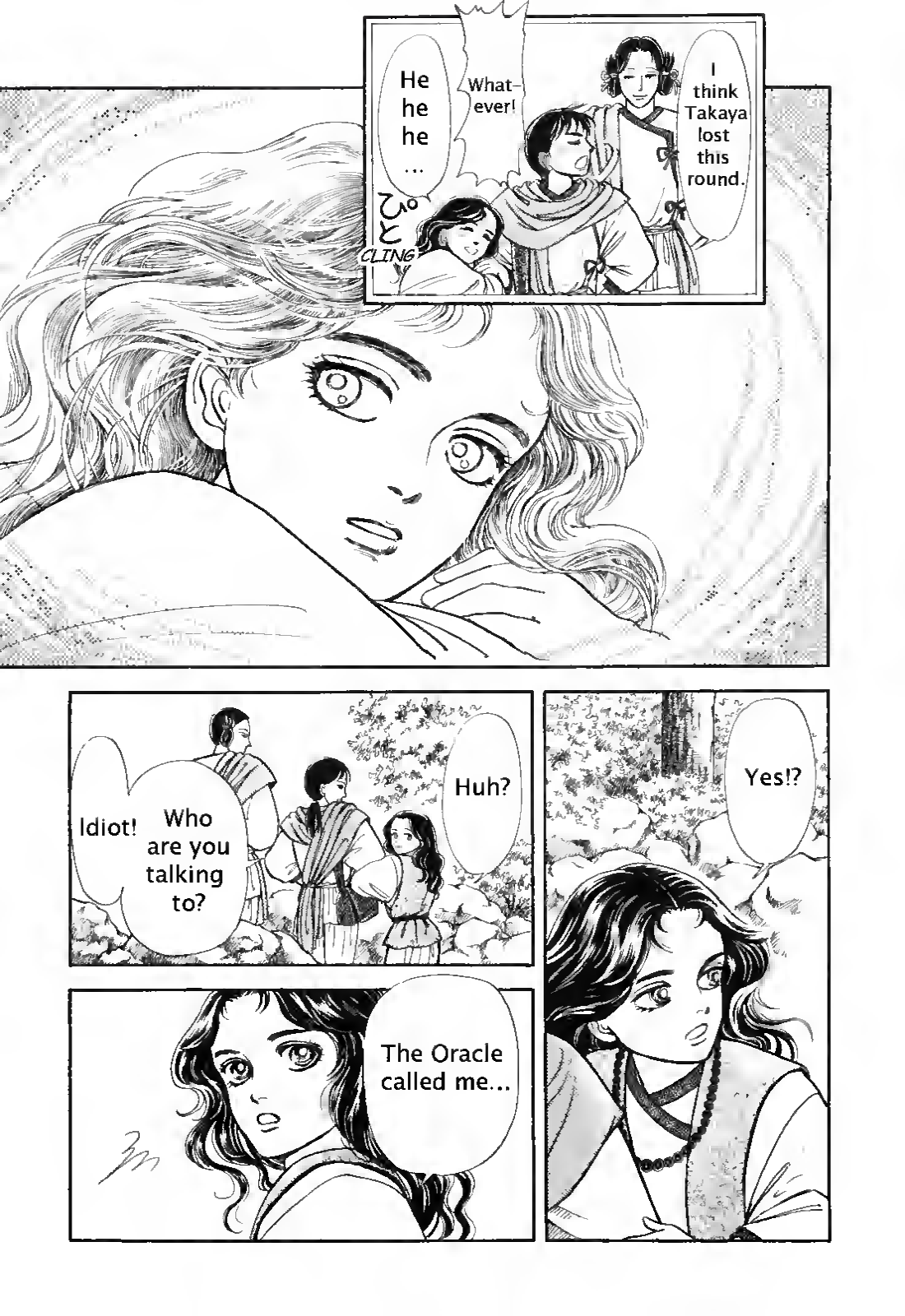
Always
so happy...

How do you tell them apart?
There are yang stones, yin stones, and regular stones.
A yang stone feels warm and a yin stone feels cool.
By putting your hands over the stone and reciting a mantra.
So even I could tell them apart?
Mm... It's not something anyone can do.

Using the power of yin stones is forbidden.
Aohiko, what are yin stones used for?
SNICKER
HMPH
But telling them apart is nothing to brag about. You have to handle them skillfully.
Why?
The power in yin stones is the exact opposite of the power in yang stones.
The oppo-site?
As a rule, yin stone mantras ...
...are only taught to the Oracle and to the person she would recognizes as the heir to her wisdom.
So it can be used to put curses on people or worsen an illness or prevent the growth of nuts or grass.

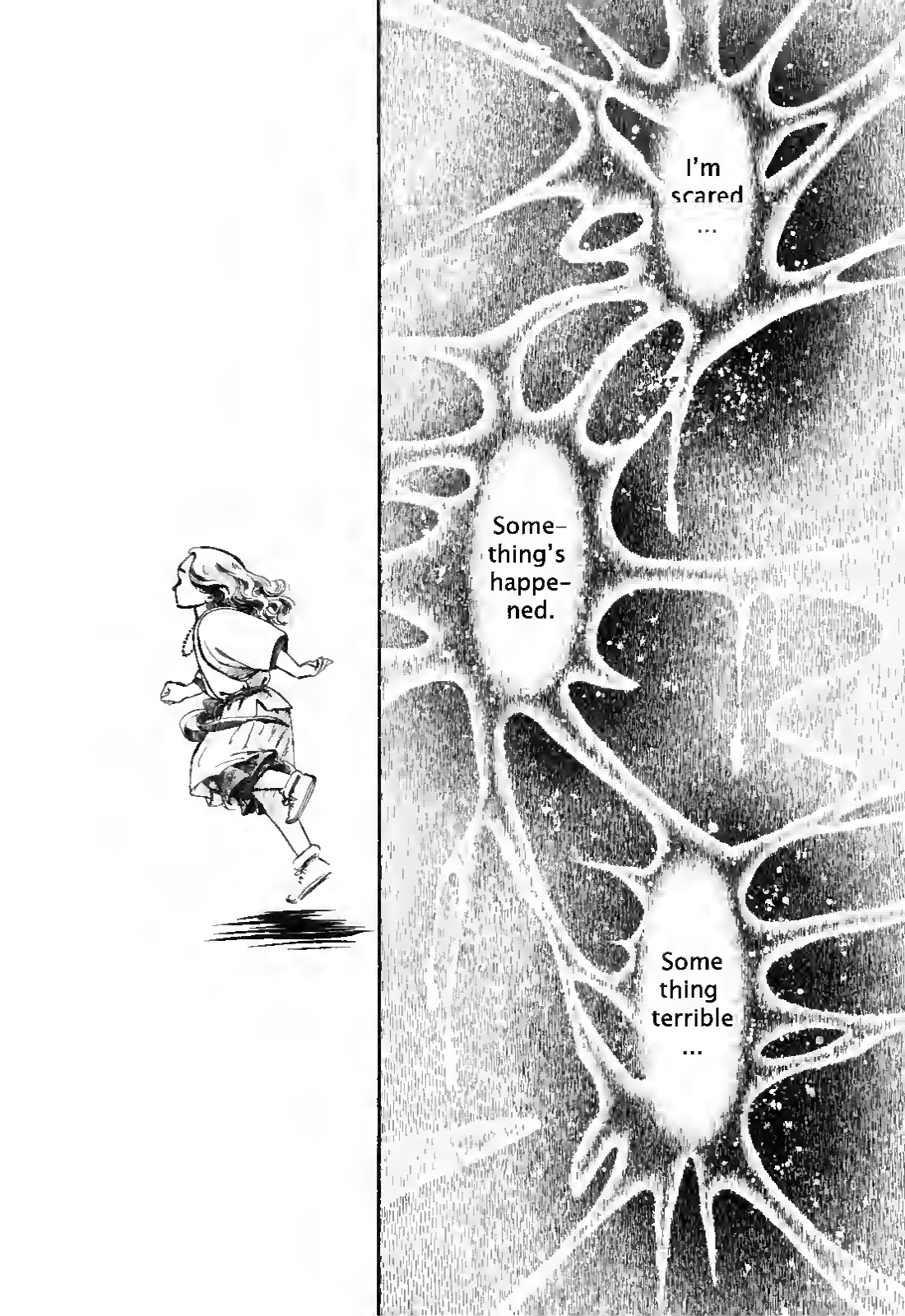
But you still love me, right?
So you still don't know the yin stone mantras.
You're such a little brat.
What is it with you...
TURN
HMPH!!
I really hate you when you get all cheeky with me.

I know Takaya said the opposite of what he meant.
Hey,hey! Cut it out, you two!
ブス
Ugly cow!
バカ
Idiot!
You could never hate me!
Ever!!


He he he ...
What-ever!
I think Takaya lost this round.
CLING
Huh?
Idiot!
Who are you talking to?
Yes!?
The Oracle called me...

...
Aohi-ko!
A fire!?
Look, Aohiko! Smoke!!
Let's head back, Takaya!
Hurry up before I'll leave you behind!
Wait... that's where our...

Taka-
ya!
Toko!
You catch
up later!!
DASH
DASH
DASH

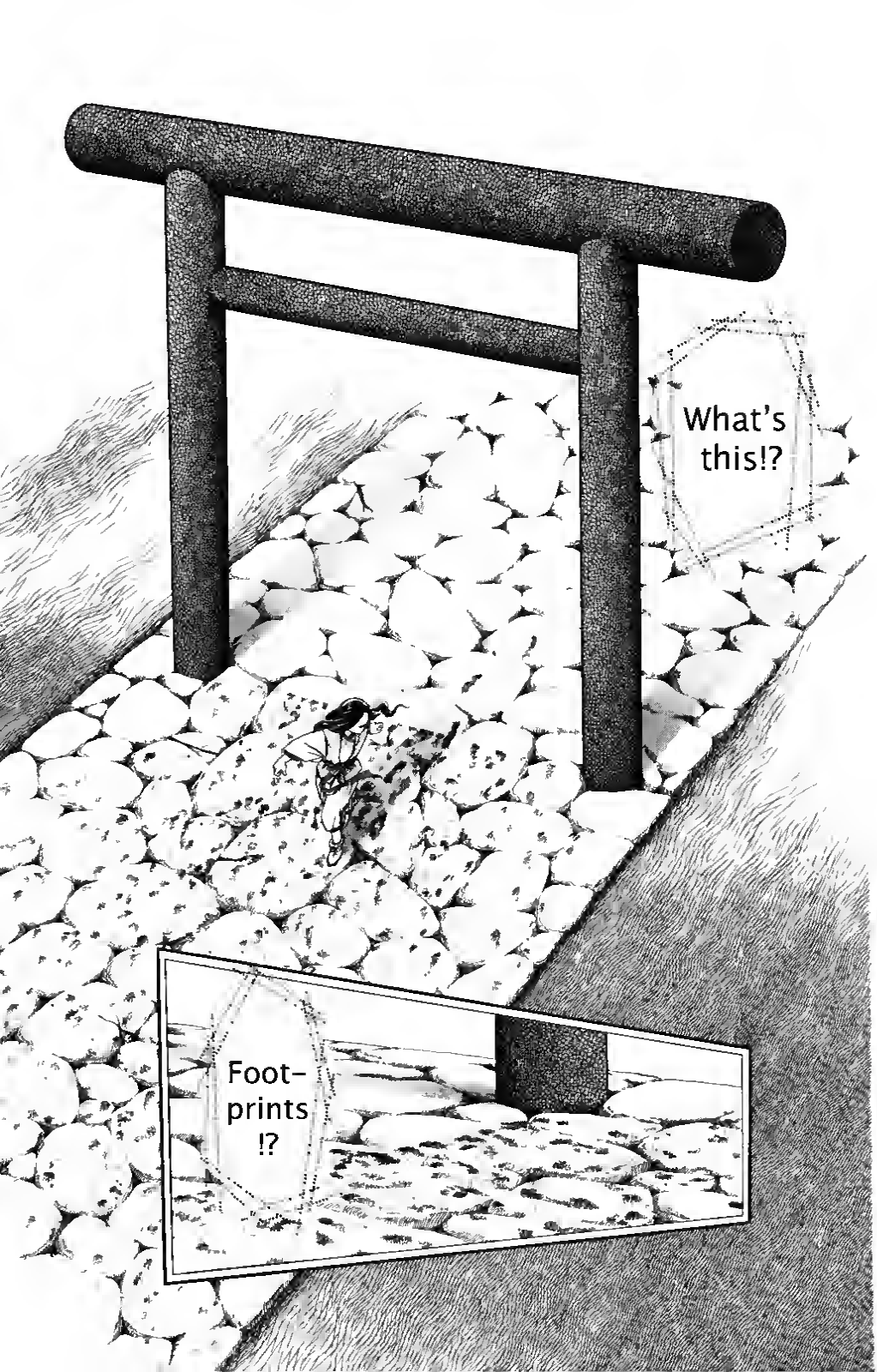

I'm scared ...
Some-thing's happe-ned.
Some thing terrible ...

CRACKLE
CRACKLE
COUGH
COUGH
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
What on earth ...

What happened !?
What !?
Where are you!?
What happe-ned!?
Ippei!
Tenpei!
No...

Ip-pei!
Stay with me!
What happe-ned!?
He's still brea-thing!
Takaya! It's Ippei!
The... child-ren ...
... foreign ... lands ...
The gods ... from ...
Were the children kid-napped ?!
Hey!
The child-ren...
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
The child-ren!?

But you're not supposed to pass through it indiscriminately...
The fastest route would be through the torii.
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
Huh!?


What's this!?
Foot-prints !?

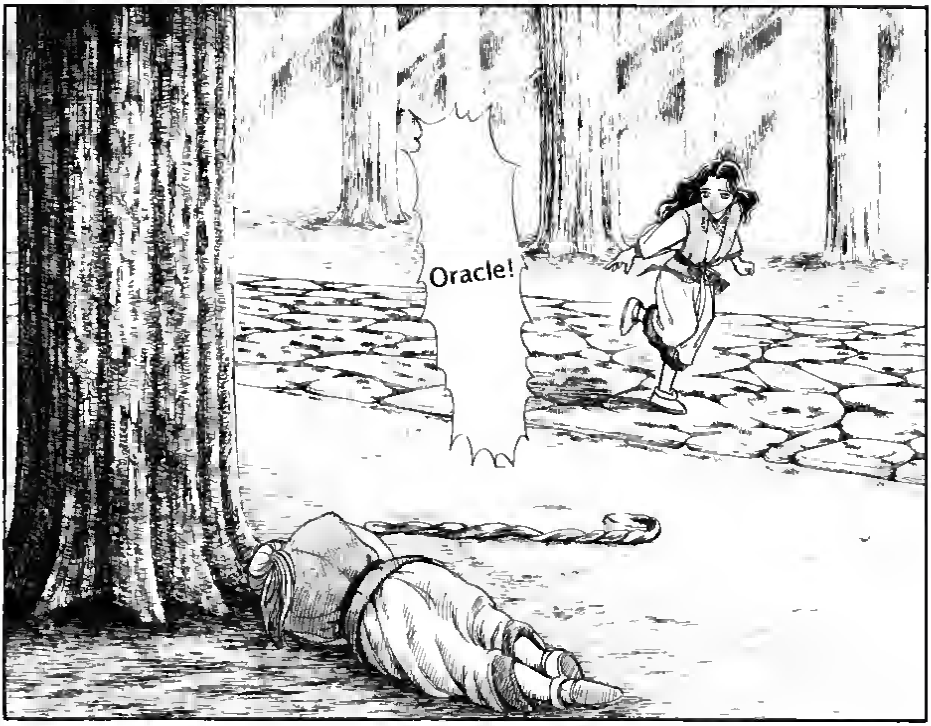
The two great continents will be reduced to dust and then, after a great flood, the gods that can be seen will appear in foreign lands everywhere, and the world will fall into chaos.
Did the gods from foreign lands do this!?
Stay with me!
Were the children kid-napped !?
Hey!
Ippei!

神かくし!!
Spirited away!
Toko will die...
Toko!

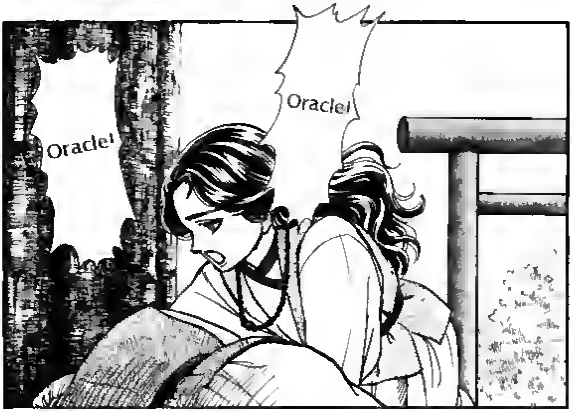
Takaya !
DASH
I'm worried about Toko!
Be careful! They may still be close by.
I'll come back as soon as I find her!
How ...

How could this have happened!

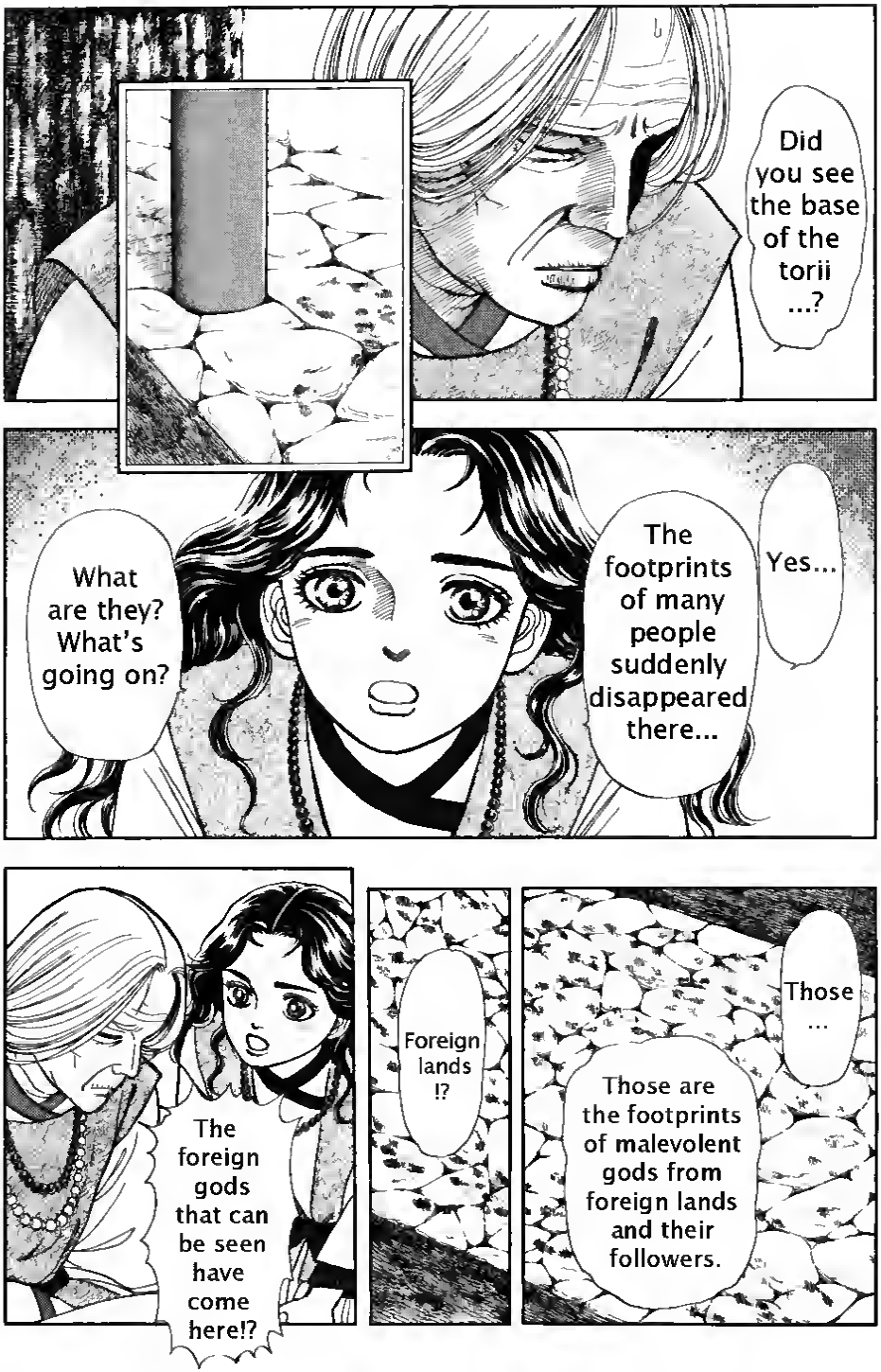
Oh!


Oracle!

Toko
...?


Oracle!
Oracle!

Oracle!
Oracle!
What happened!? Why are you over here?!
Wait ...
Wait ...
I'll go get Takaya and Aohiko!
Now listen ...
Oracle ...
If you stay here, Takaya will find you before long...
...and Aohiko should follow soon after...
...but they may not make it in time.


Did you see the base of the torii ...?
Yes...
The footprints of many people suddenly disappeared there...
What are they? What's going on?
Those ...
Those are the footprints of malevolent gods from foreign lands and their followers.
Foreign lands !?
The foreign gods that can be seen have come here!?

The gods pass ...
...So they passed through there?
The torii is the gate through which the gods that cannot be seen pass.
Yes ...
B-but... that torii was built by the gods that cannot be seen!
It is some-thing only gods can do.
They appeared and left through that gate...

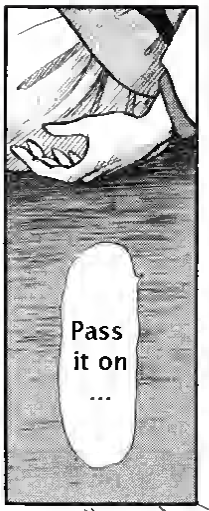
They said that the gods that cannot be seen no longer dwell anywhere, neither in the heavens nor on the earth,...
...and to obey them from now on ...
Why have those foreign gods come here ...!?
What happened !?
Oracle ...
They told me to hand over the children ...
I said... I couldn't do that...

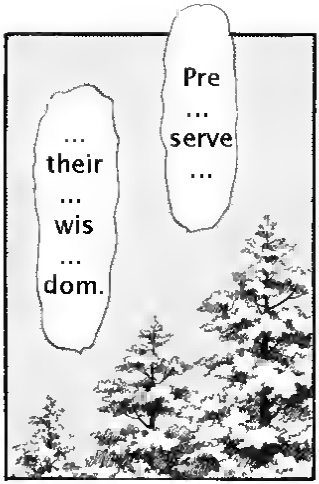
Oracle ...
I said we would not obey them...
They told us they were a group under Kiyu the Silver Horned God.
... They do horrible things ...
They are evil gods, as you can see...

Toko!
As you can see...
Takaya!
Oracle! Why are you here ...?
Takaya!
What happened?
How are the others?
How are the others?

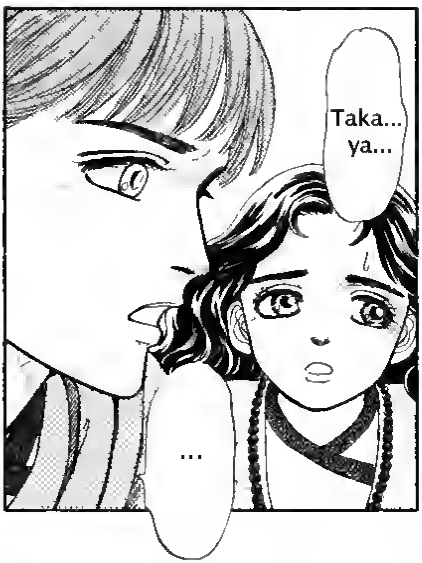
Takaya
...
Oracle
...
...
Takaya
?
The sacred treasures and books of wisdom received from the gods that cannot be seen are buried at the base of this tree...
Please... tell Aohiko...
Oracle
Study well
...
... their wis-dom.

To
Toko
...
...
first to...
To...ko...

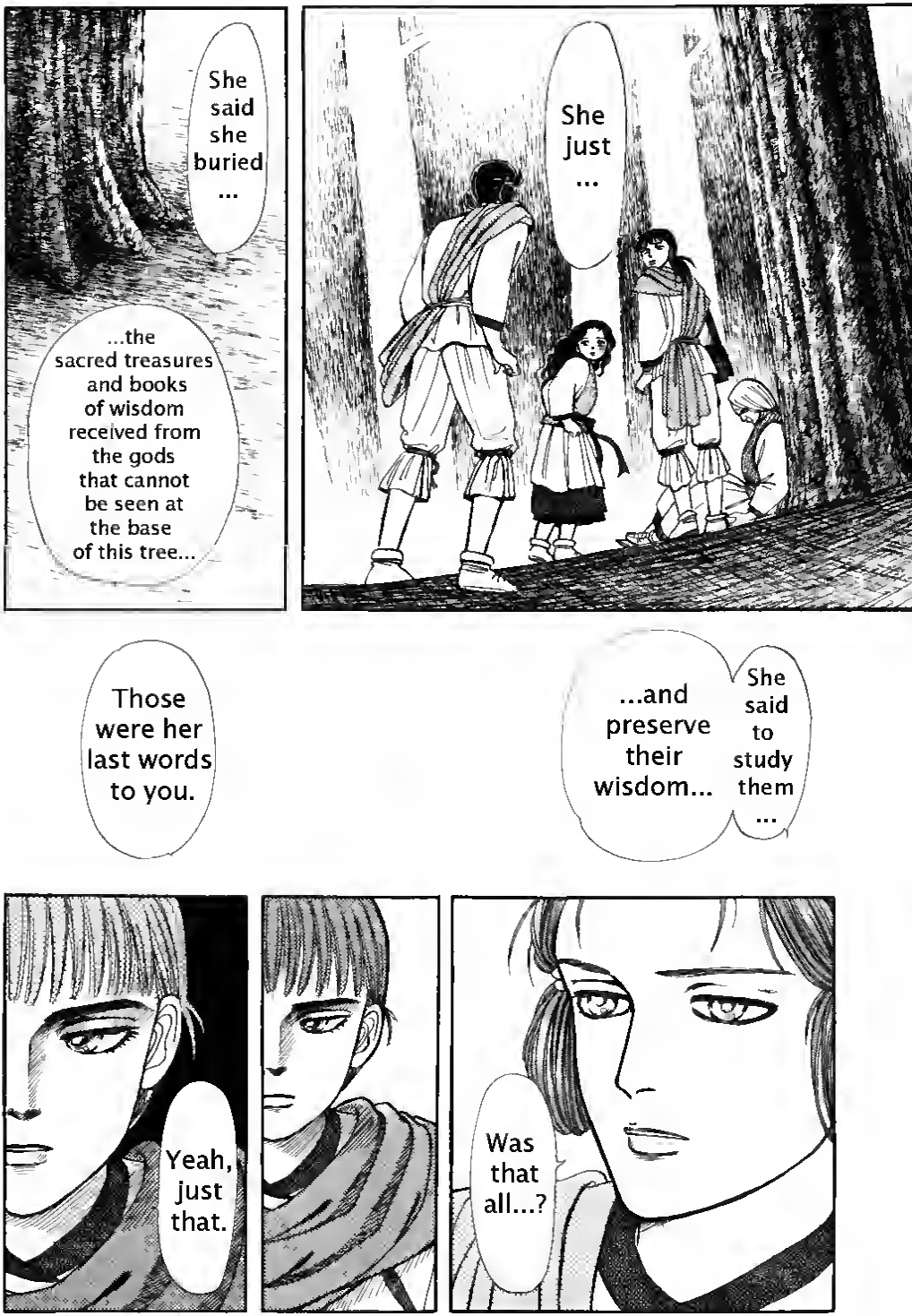

Pass
it on
...


Pre
...
serve
...
...
their
...
wis
...
dom.

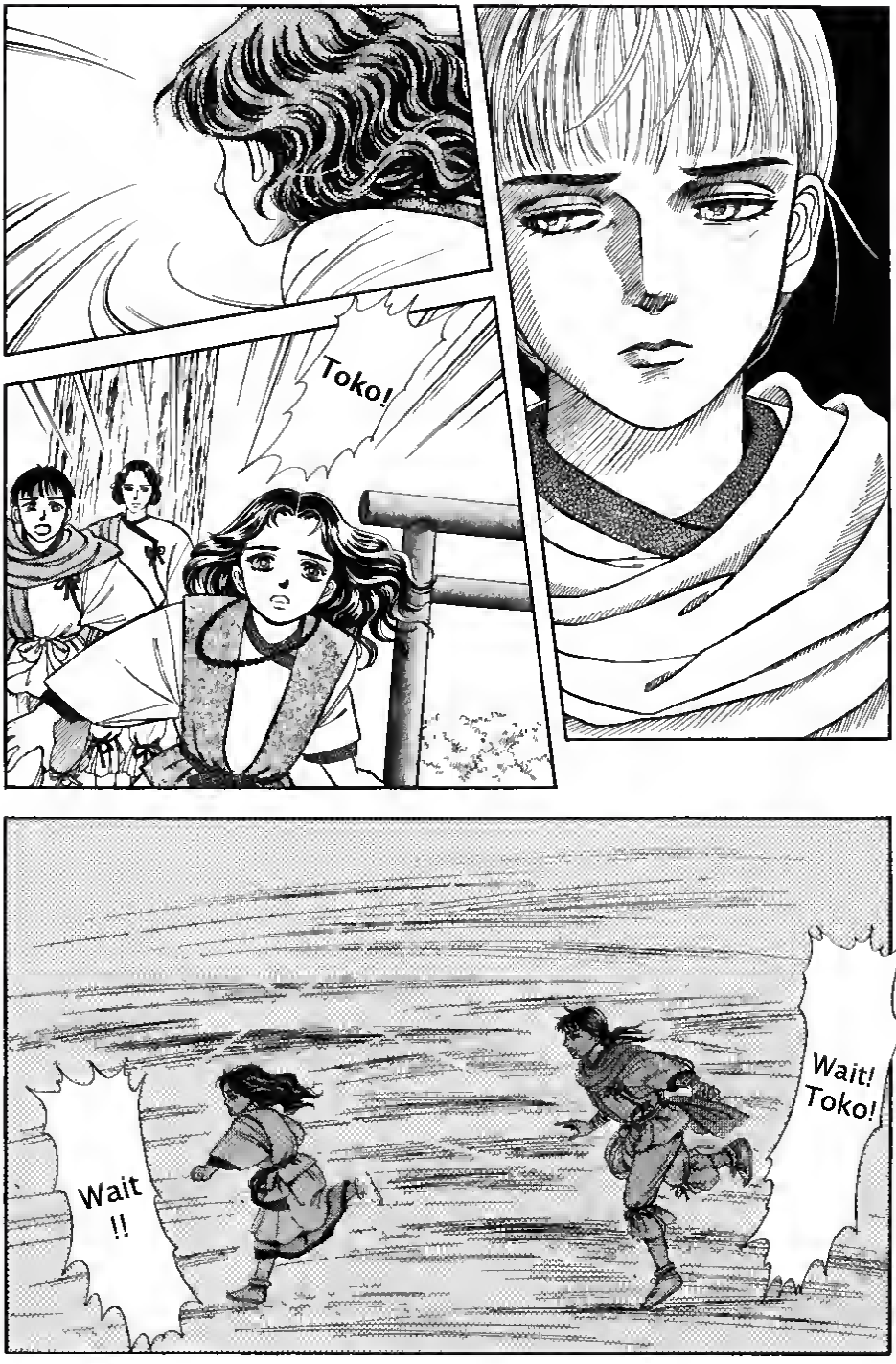
And...
then...
...
the...
n...

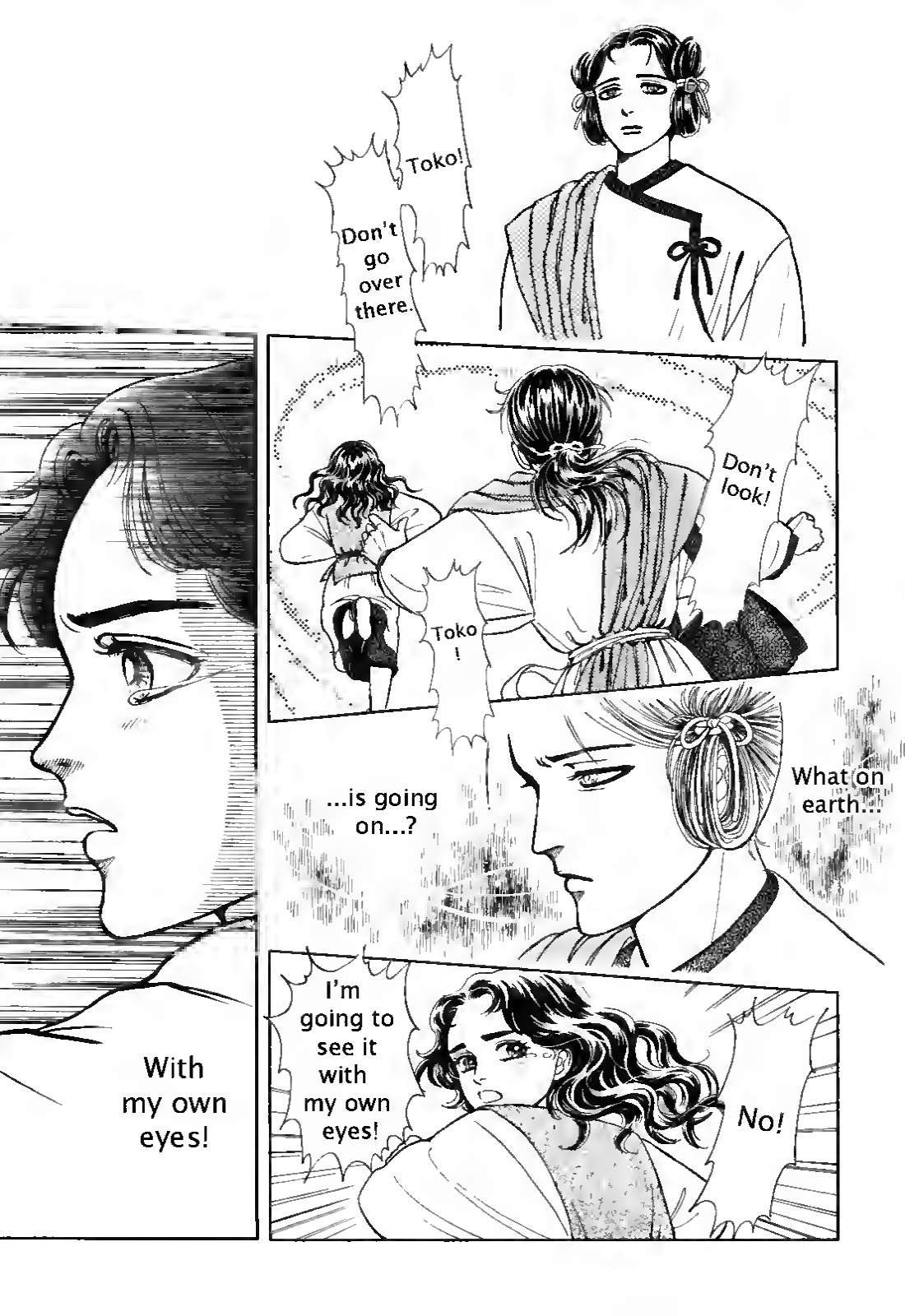

Taka...
ya...
...

Takaya
!
There you are!
Toko!
Takaya
!
Oh!
You had me wor-ried.


She said she buried ...
...the sacred treasures and books of wisdom received from the gods that cannot be seen at the base of this tree...
She just ...
Those were her last words to you.
...and preserve their wisdom...
She said to study them ...
Yeah, just that.
Was that all...?

She said, "And then..." and was about to continue, but then...
ギュッ
SQUEEZE
I see ...
The others have also passed on.
He didn't make it...
How about Ippei?
What happened!?
Takaya!?
Wh-what ...?
Good grief ...

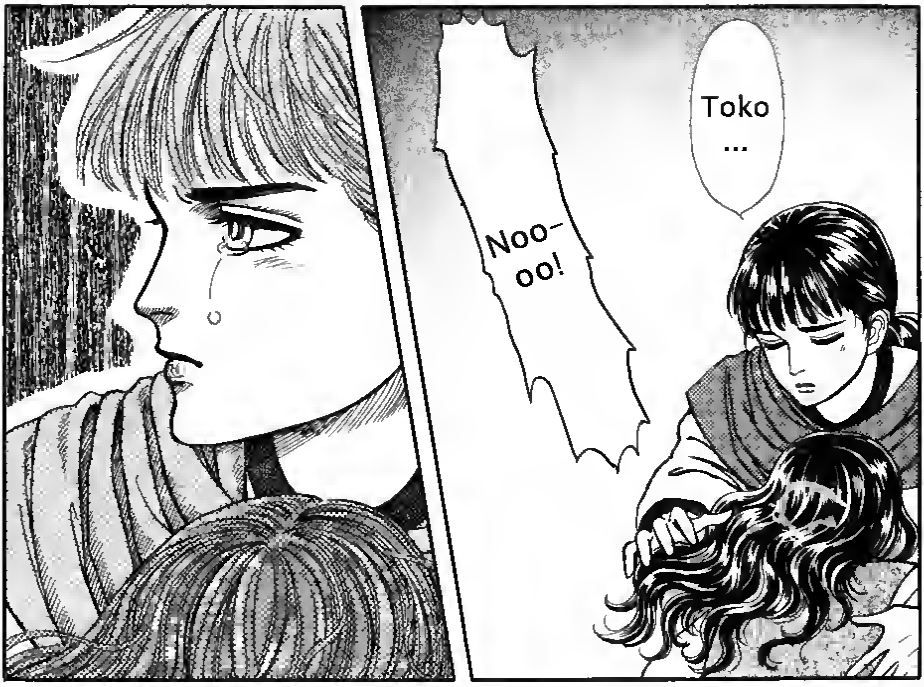

Toko!
Wait!
Toko!
Wait
!!


Toko!
Don't go over there.
Don't look!
Toko!
What on earth...
...is going on...?
I'm going to see it with my own eyes!
No!
With my own eyes!

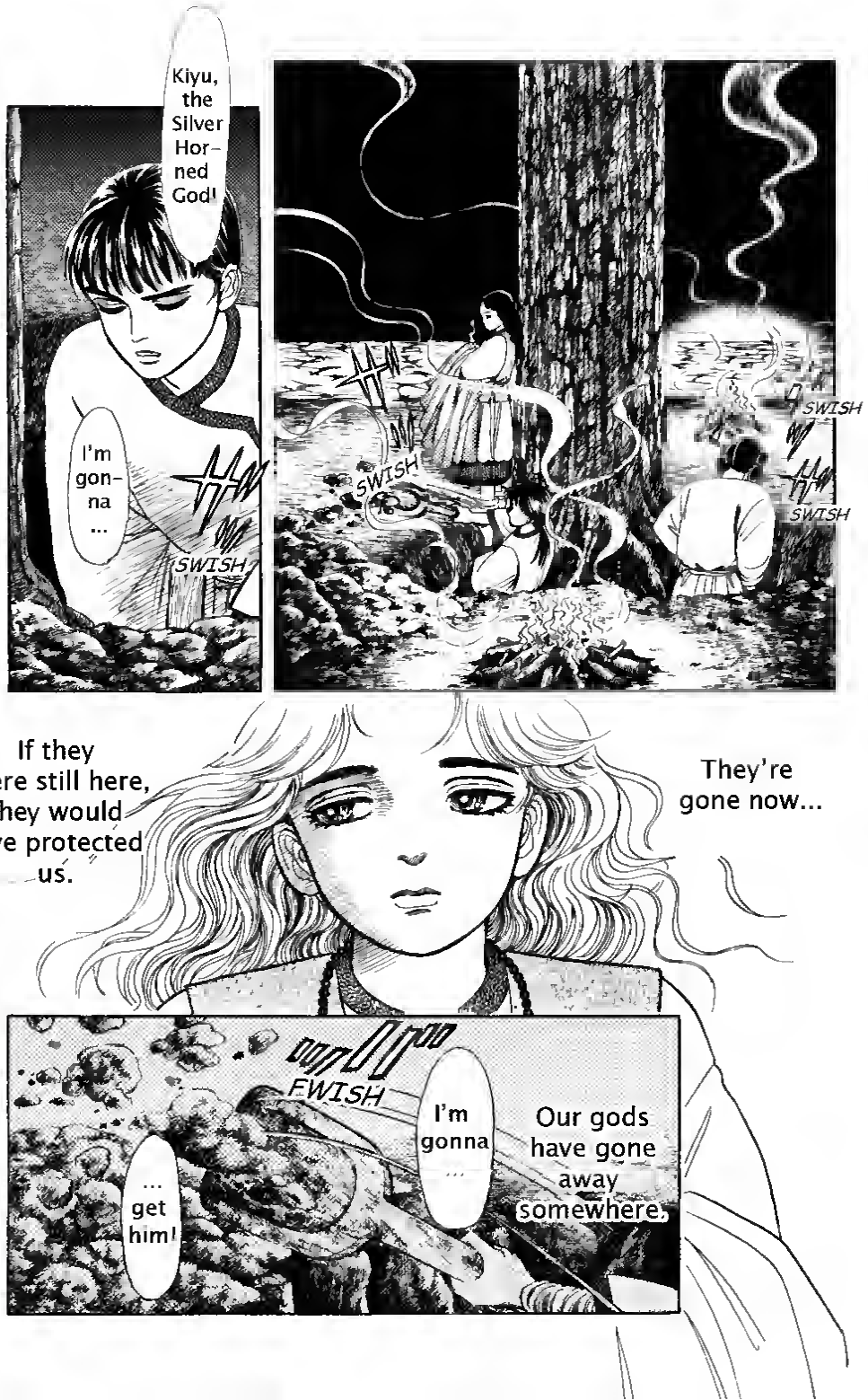
Toko !
Toko !
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

バラ
RATTLE
CRACKLE

あ…
No…
Nooo…
N-no-oo…


Toko
...
Noo-
oo!

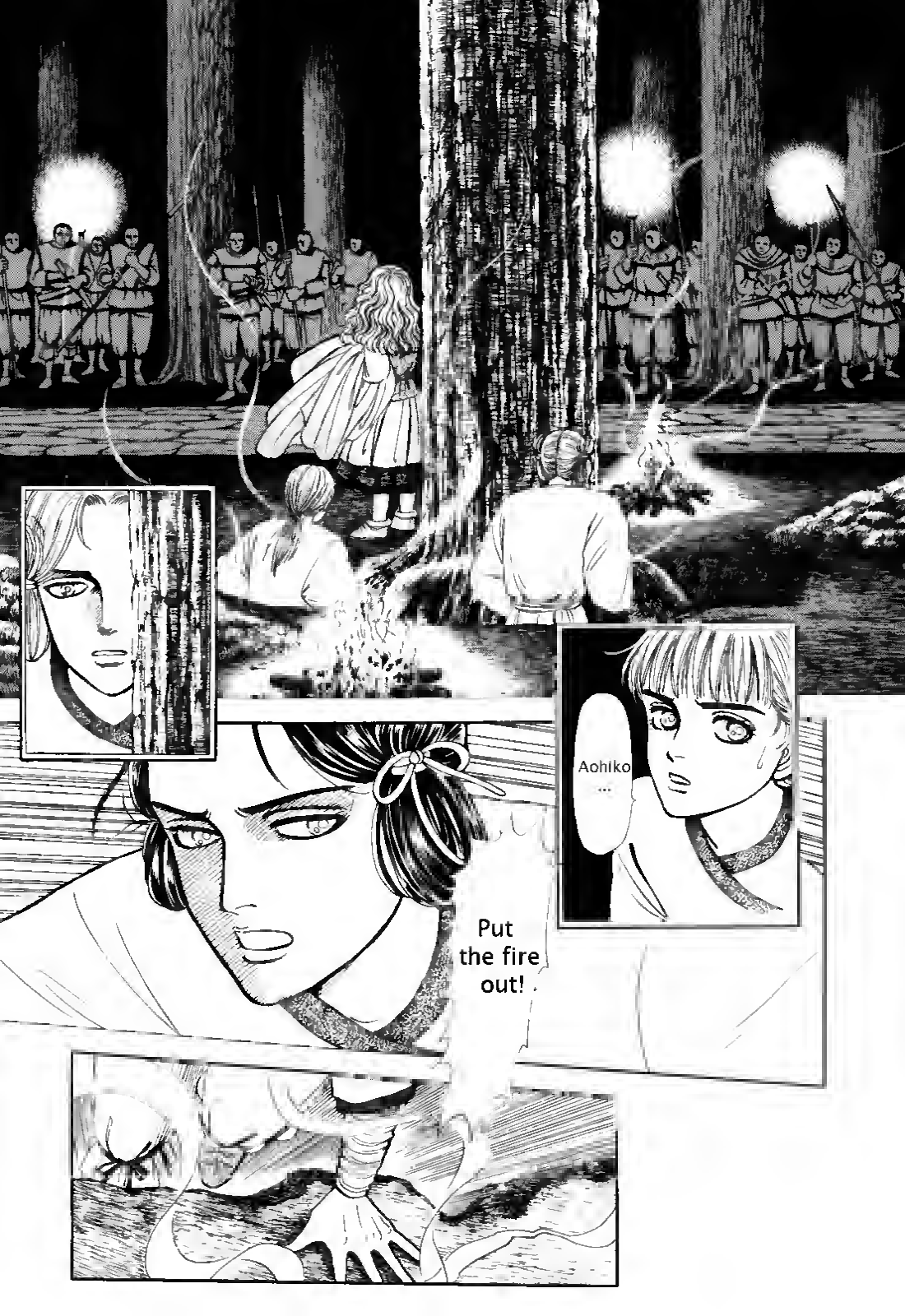
The gods
that cannot
be seen no longer
dwell anywhere, neither
in the heavens
nor on the earth.


Kiyu, the Silver Horned God!
I'm gonna ...
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
If they were still here, they would have protected us.
They're gone now...
I'm gonna ...
... get him!
Our gods have gone away somewhere.

How could I not!?
I'll get him!
It's not like taking down a wild boar.
SWISH SWISH
They could be eating Tenpei and the others right now!
They took children from the ages of 7 or 8 to 14 or 15.
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
If they had wanted to eat them, they would have taken the babies too.

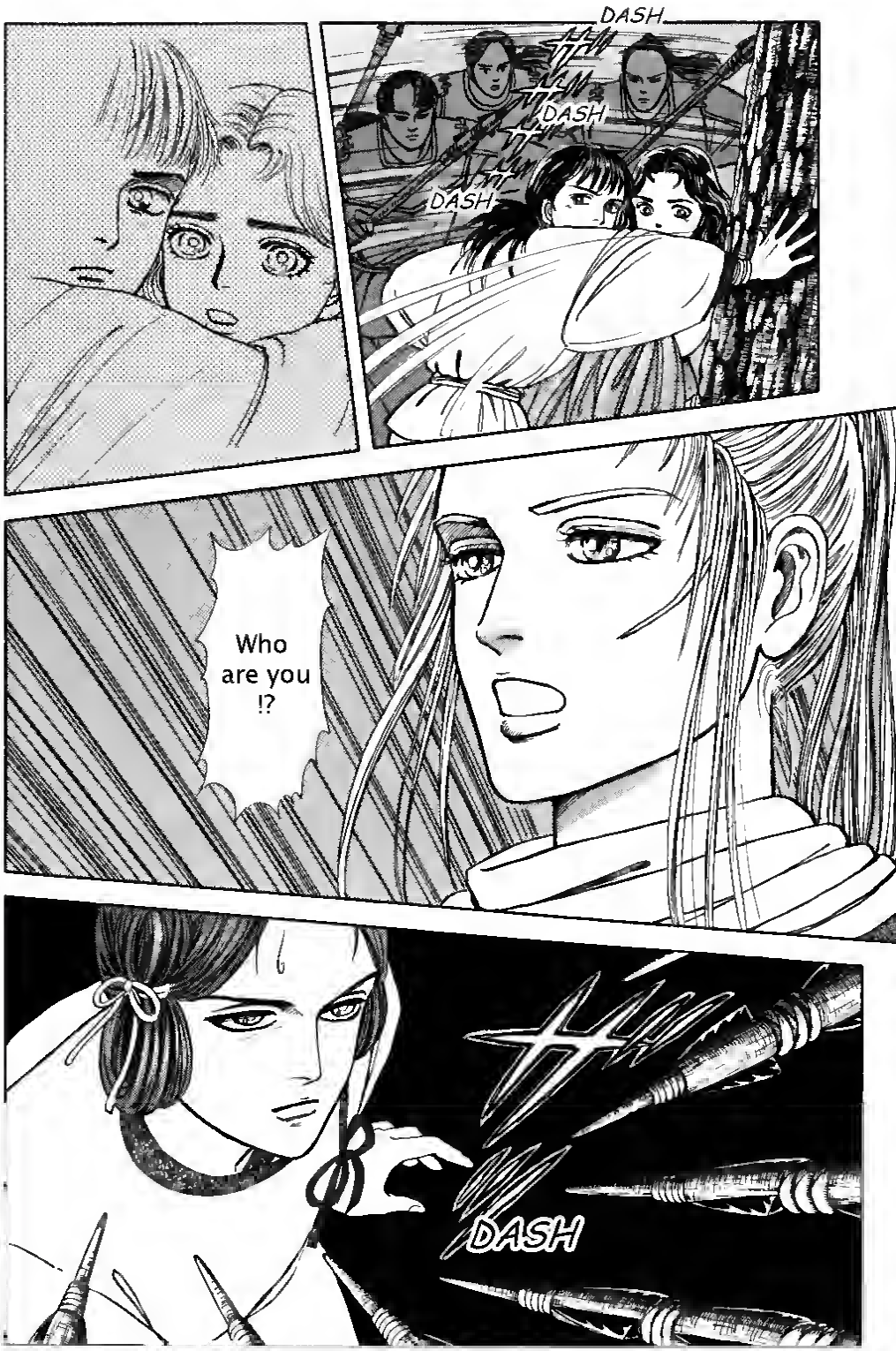
Well, I'm gonna hunt them down!
...
I hate sitting around like this with no idea of what's going on!
What's happening in these foreign lands? Why did we have to go through this?
And what exactly are these gods?

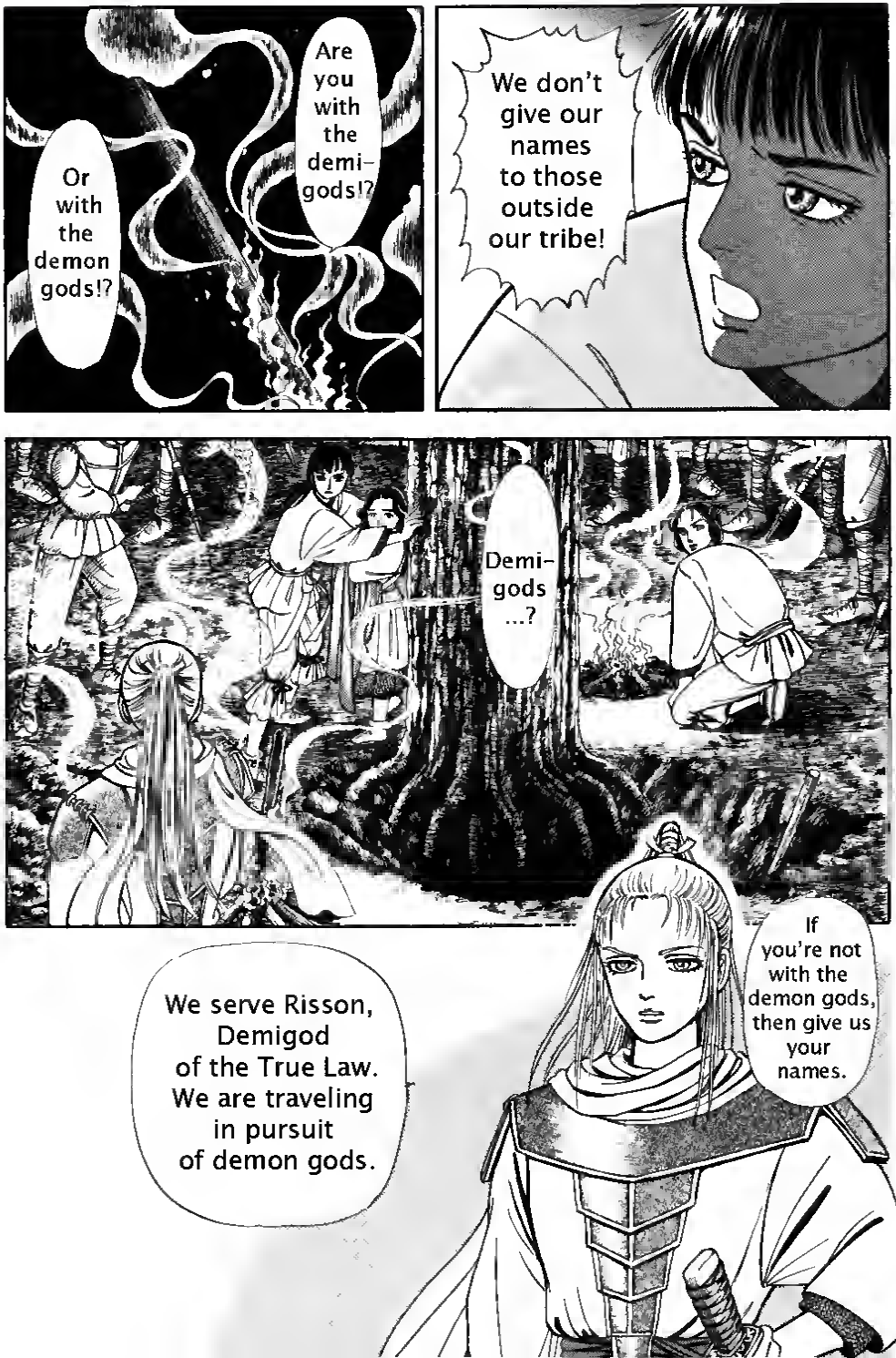
Is it aware it will die when we dig up the sacred treasures...?
It was buried as if the roots of the tree are protecting it.
If we cut any more roots, the tree is going to die.
...we're not going to stay here.
Ob-viously ...
Aohi-ko-o!
I just said something really cool but you weren't paying attention
GASP
First we'll dig up the sacred treasures, then build the graves and gather whatever we can still use...


Aohiko
...
Put the fire out!

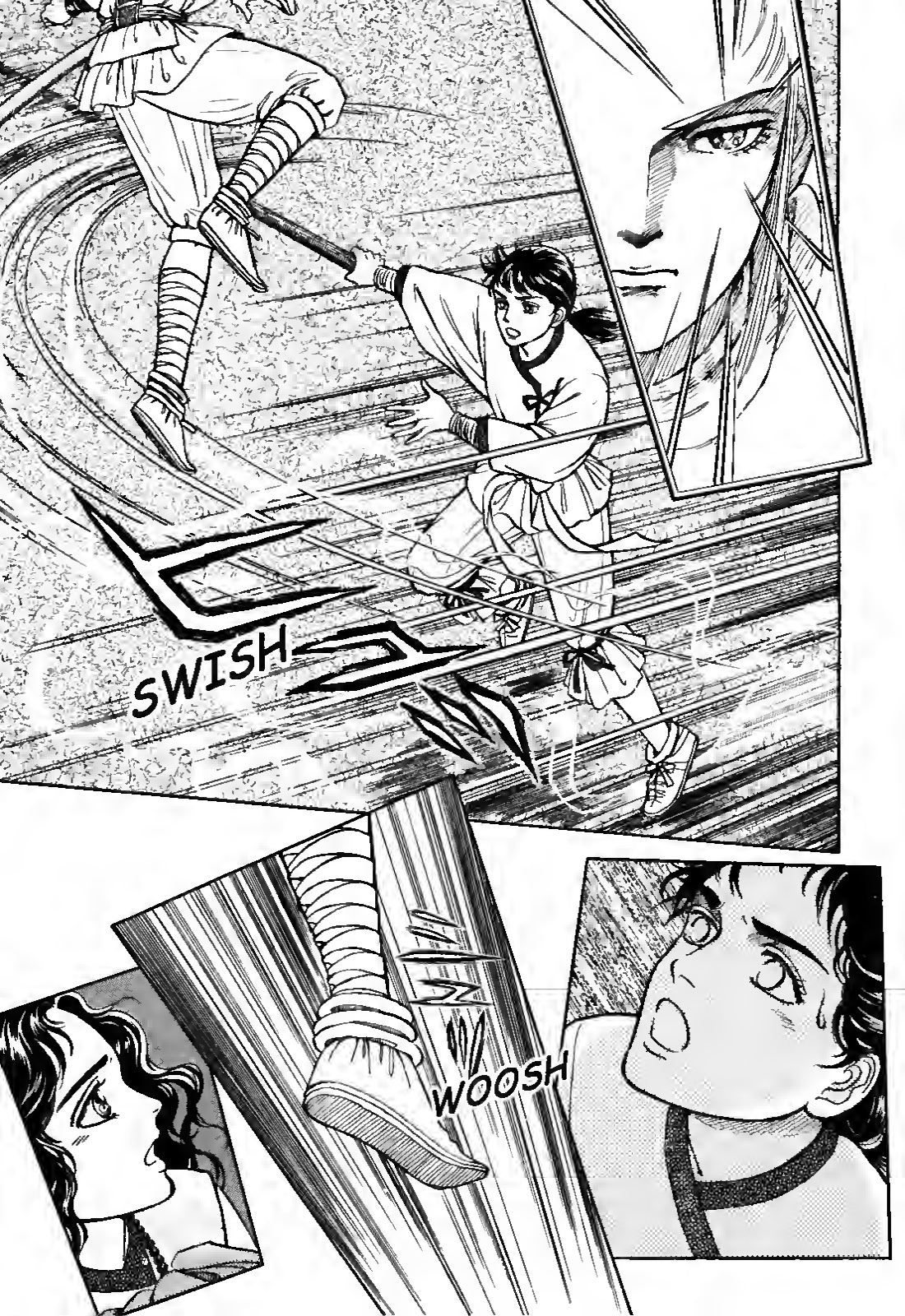
Takaya!
WHISH
THUD

メラ
CRACKLE
メラ
CRACKLE
メラ
CRACKLE
TWANG
TWANG

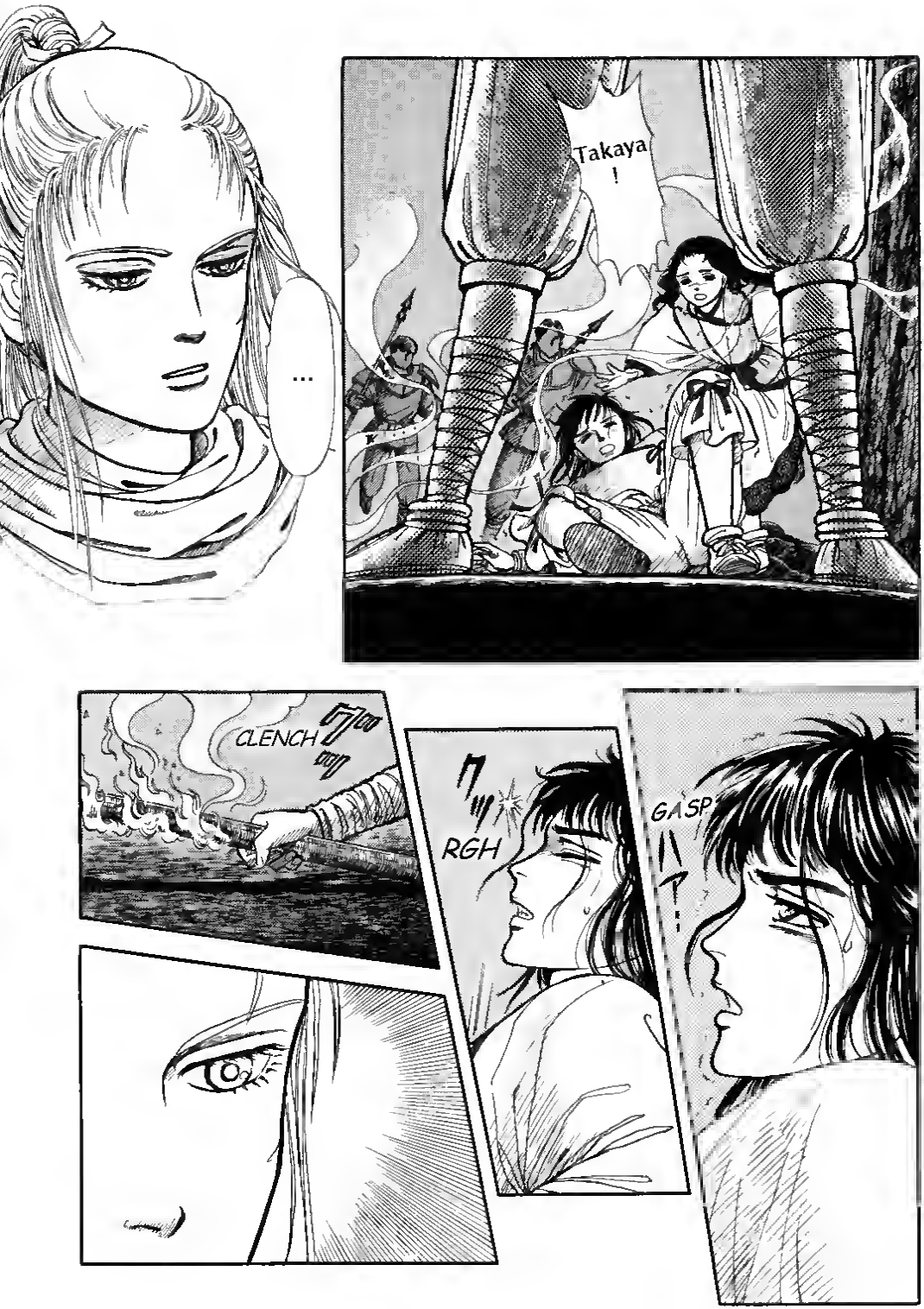

DASH
DASH
DASH
Who are you !?
DASH


Are you with the demi-gods!?
Or with the demon gods!?
We don't give our names to those outside our tribe!
Demi-gods ...?
We serve Risson, Demigod of the True Law. We are traveling in pursuit of demon gods.
If you're not with the demon gods, then give us your names.

Are demi-gods ...
...gods that can be seen?
Of course !
FWIP
Takaya !
GRAB
YAAH!

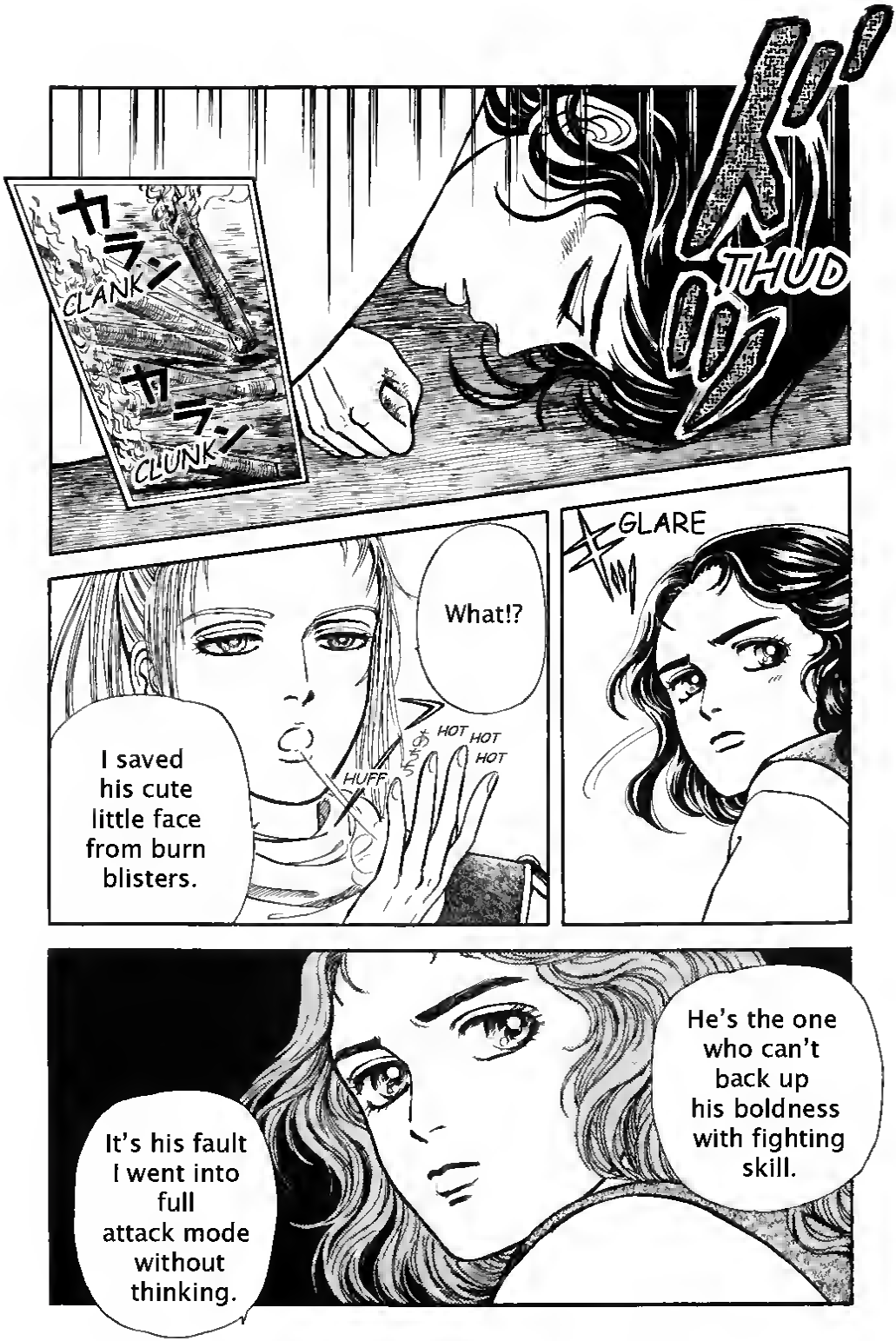

SWISH
WOOSH

KER-SHAK
THUD


...
Takaya
!
CLENCH
RGH
GASP

Your hands !
GRIP
Your hands !
Takaya !

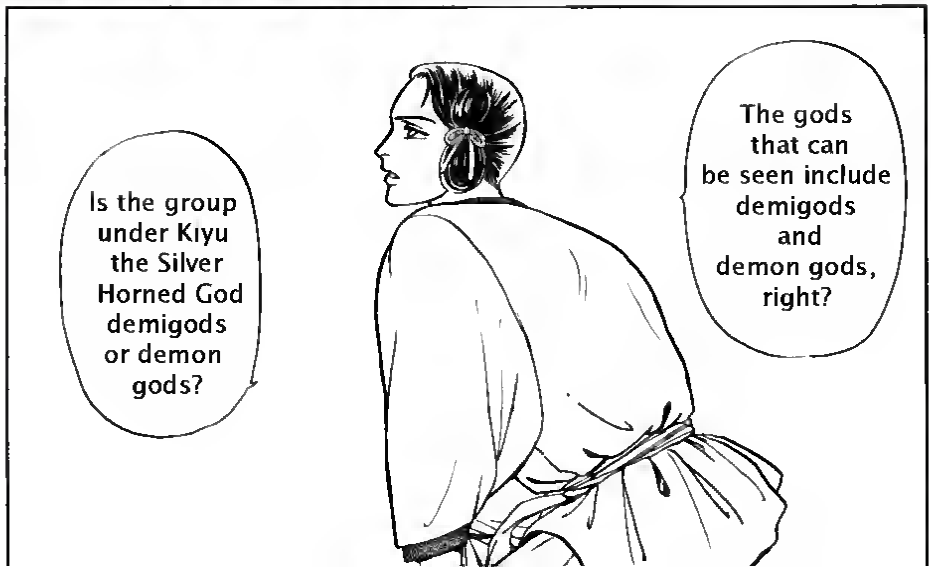
Takaya !
WOBBLE
YANK
FWT
FWISH


カラン
CLANK
カラン
CLUNK
THUD
What!?
I saved his cute little face from burn blisters.
HUFF
HOT
HOT
HOT
GLARE
It's his fault I went into full attack mode without thinking.
He's the one who can't back up his boldness with fighting skill.

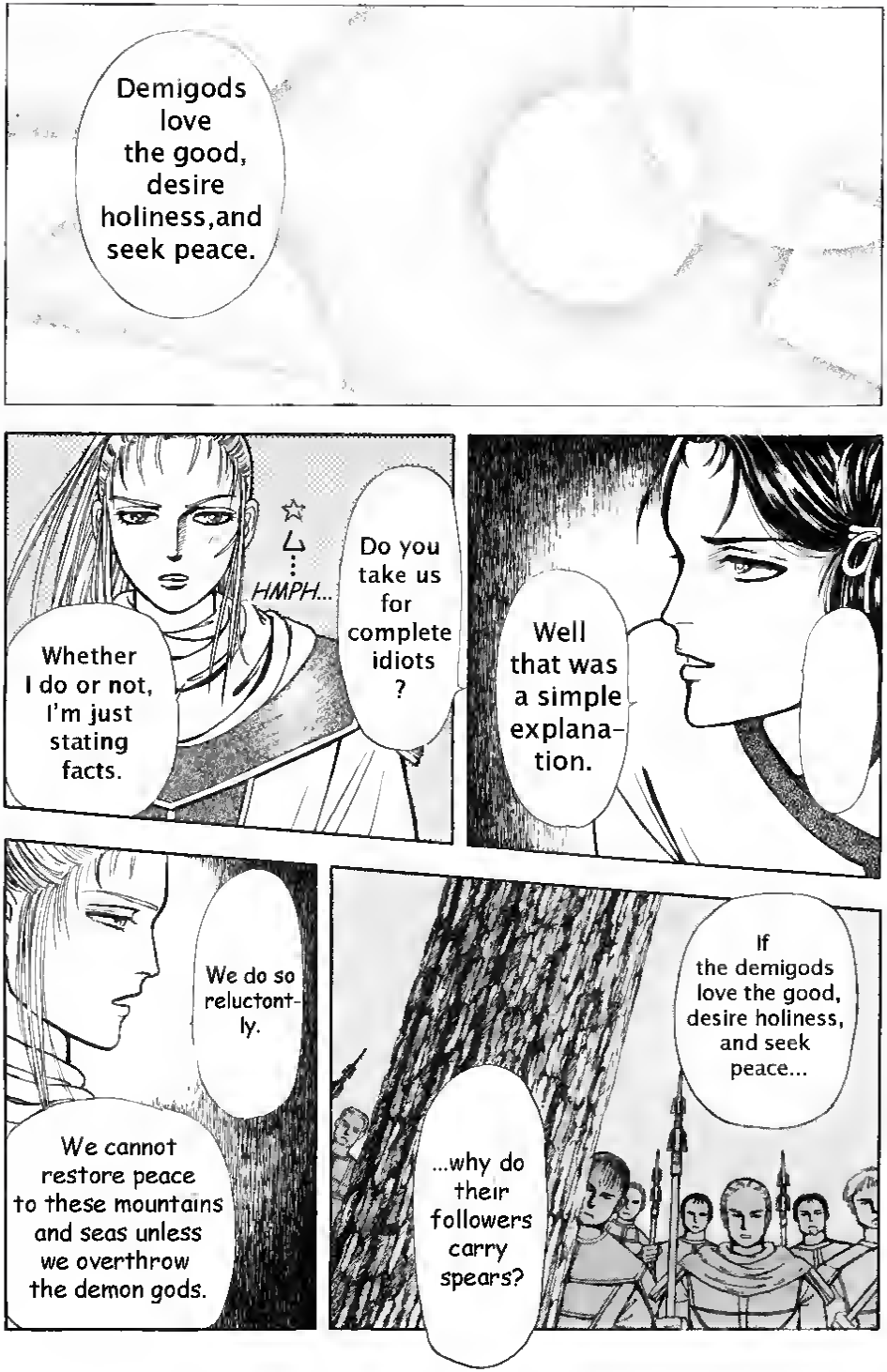
You also have a boldness beyond your years.
HEH
It's not like I killed him.
STARE
I'd like to hear more about these demigods and demon gods.
You have a nice voice.
Not a hint of agitation.

Your tribe is lucky, though, to have been unharmed this long without knowing the difference...
We have not been un-harmed.
That is why I ask.

...

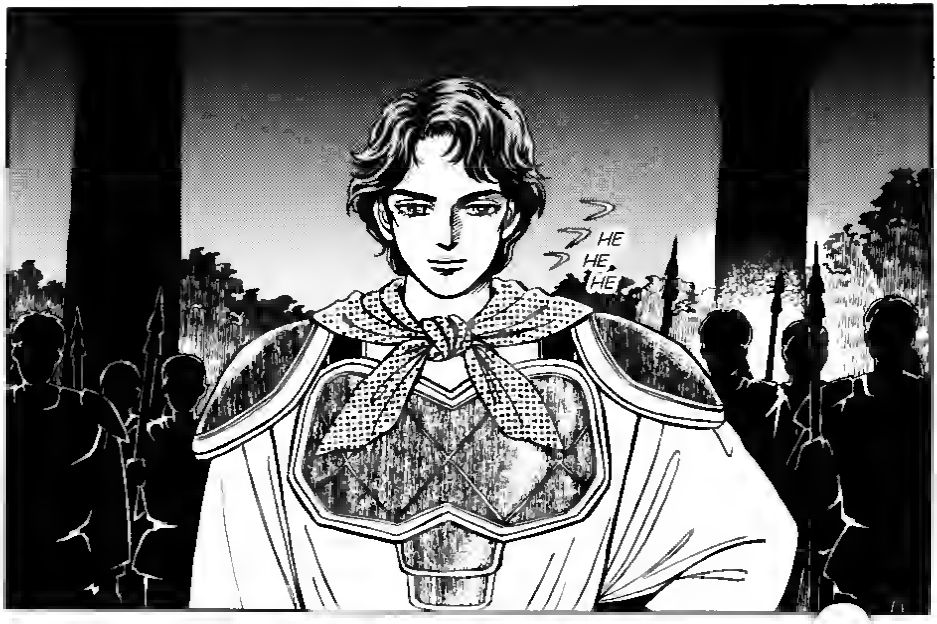

Is the group under Kiyu the Silver Horned God demigods or demon gods?
The gods that can be seen include demigods and demon gods, right?

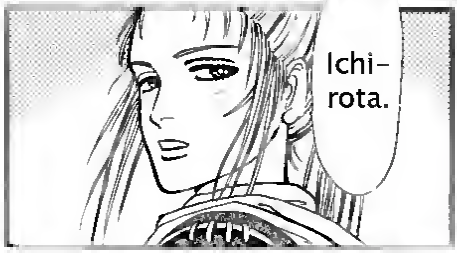
Kiyu is one of the head leaders of the demon gods.
Kiyu !?
De-mon gods ...!?
The demon gods love evil, desire darkness, and seek destruction.


Demigods love the good, desire holiness,and seek peace.
HMPH...
Do you take us for complete idiots ?
Whether I do or not, I'm just stating facts.
Well that was a simple explana-tion.
We do so reluctant-ly.
We cannot restore peace to these mountains and seas unless we overthrow the demon gods.
If the demigods love the good, desire holiness, and seek peace...
...why do their followers carry spears?

We only follow the gods that cannot be seen!
Why do you now follow the demigods?
If you are in habitants of these mountains and seas, you must have followed them as well!
We don't know how it started!
If the demon gods are committing evil deeds, it is our duty to fight them!
The gods that cannot be seen are no longer anywhere to be found!

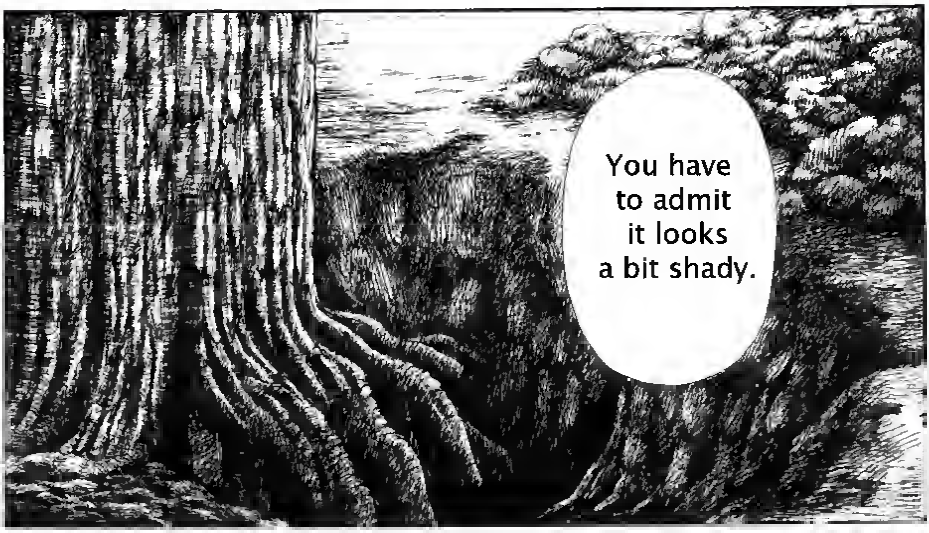
Why did the demigods and demon gods appear in foreign lands?
That is...
And why did they travel to our small island homeland?
... unknown to us mortals!
We must find out why!
How unlike you...
...to recoil before a man! Not like you at all.
... Kat-sura! ...
GRIMACE

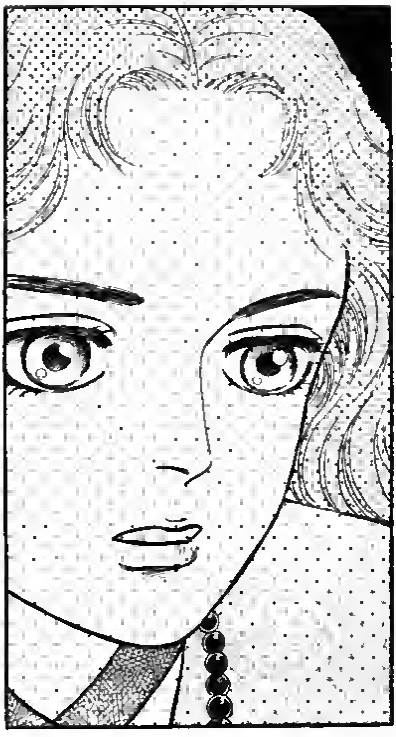




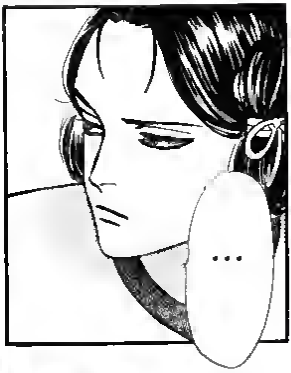
It was a horrible spectacle even from our vantage point.

These must be survi-vors.


You have to admit it looks a bit shady.



We're allies, but we've had a hard time...
... dealing with ignorant tribes.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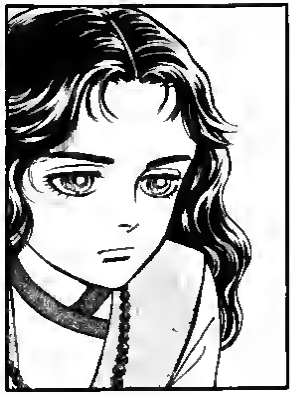
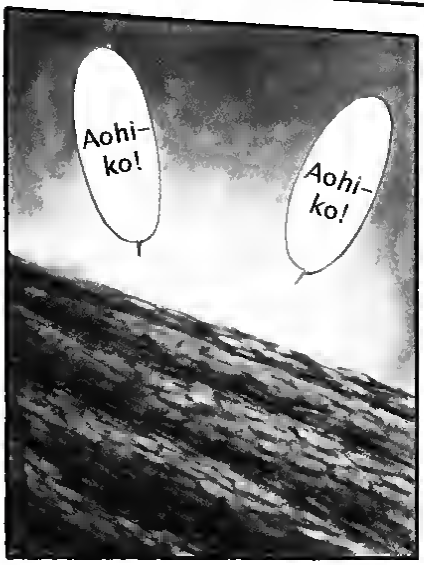


!!
Aohiko!
The tree...!
CRREAK
Takaya!
Takaya, get up!
Toko!
!!
Katsura!

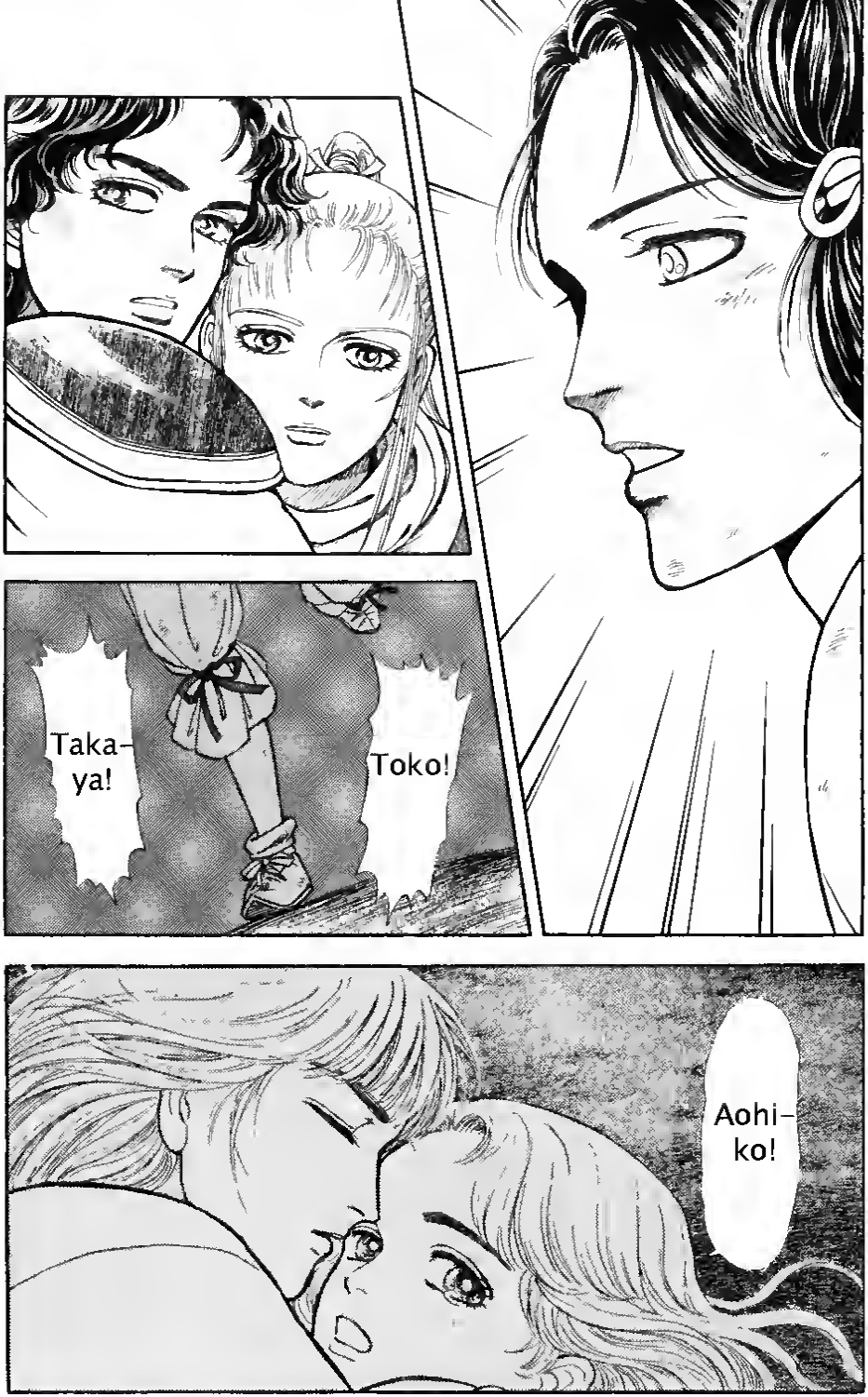
SNAP
TAKAYA
!
SNAP
SNAP

ズズズ
WHUMMMP

Toko
...
Takaya
...


Aohi-
ko!
Aohi-
ko!

Don't
lose your
head,
Katsura.
Ah
...


Taka-
ya!
Toko!
Aohi-
ko!

KO
BAM
Let me go, Ichirota !
Takaya opened his eyes, grabbed me, and rolled us out of the way!
Opened his eyes ?
But he's still uncons-cious.
Yeah ...

Nothing besides the blow from before and the burns on his hands.
No...
Was he struck somewhere?
It's odd that he opened his eyes...
We'd better cool his hands and neck quickly.
I hate to brag, but one of my direct kicks can put someone out for half a day.
... Good idea.
We can get fresh water from the mountains there.
Let's go to the Tosai Caves.
Aohi-ko!

The mountain doesn't belong to anyone.
Oh well.
If you're talking about the caves on the east side of the mountain, that's where we set up our camp.
There are several Tosai caves. I'm sure one of them is empty.
Aohi-ko!
Later. We'll take care of Takaya first.
What about that?

SFT
SFT
SFT

A bright blue moon.
It's so beautiful...

I hope the weather's nice tomorrow.
I'll look for medicinal herbs that are good for burns as soon as it's light.
I'll have some medicine sent over later.

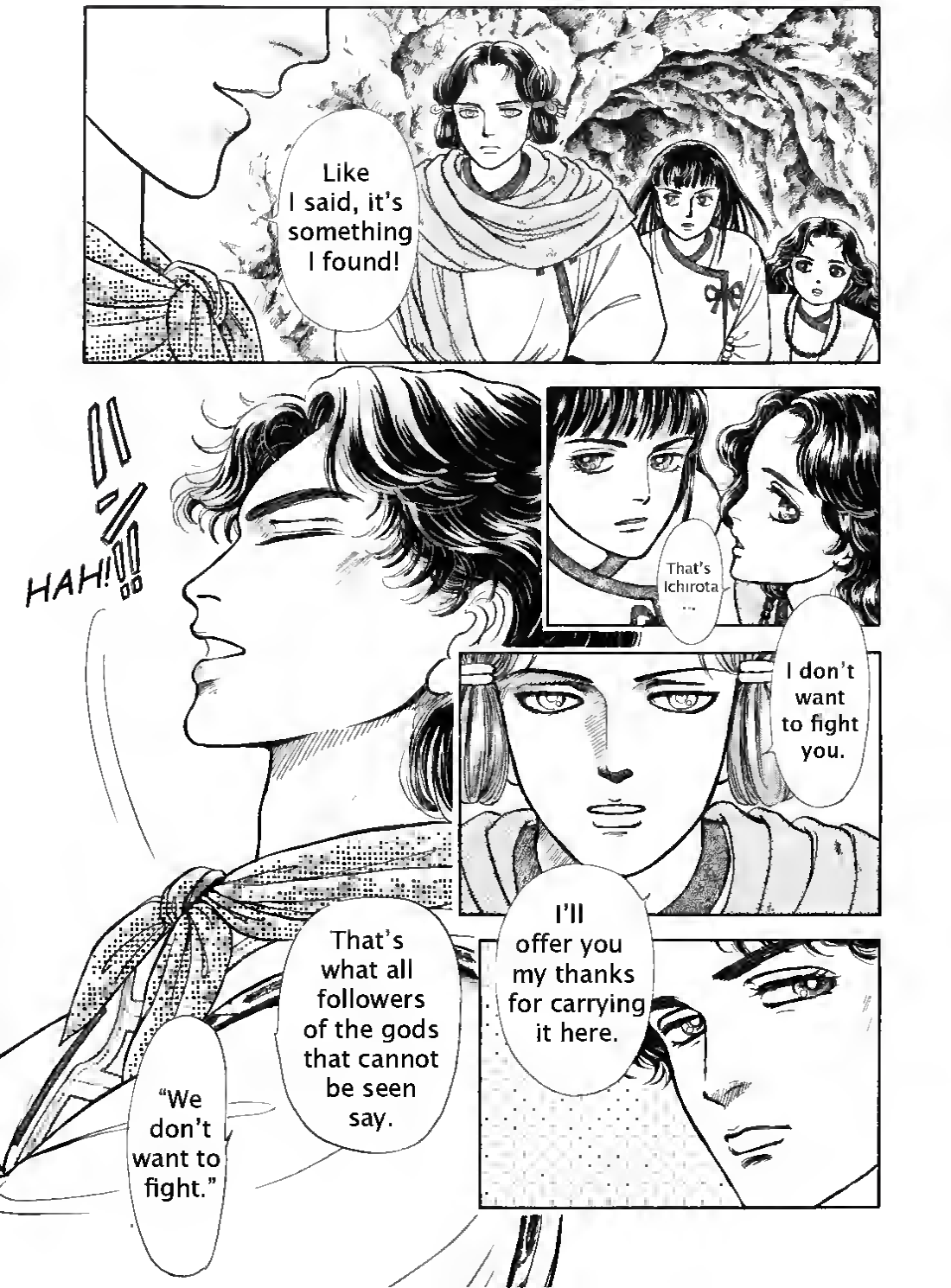
For a moment there...
...my eyes and mind were completely focused on the moon as if I were spellbound...
...even though my people have been killed and I'm carrying my wounded apprentice in my arms...
I've always been that way...
...the kind of person ...
...whose mind flies...
...to the heavens and earth in an instant.

I see ...
So the gods that can be seen are divided into demigods and demon gods.
So, Taka-ya ...!
You really don't remem-ber!?
You opened your eyes at that point.
I don't even remember the tree falling.
Owww!
Just lie down!
YOUUCH

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
PFFFT
Toko's been keeping them cool all night long.
YOW-OW-OW-OW
わーちっちっ
フルンフル
WHOOF WHOOF
I'll go get it while it's still dark.
I'll go with you, Aohi-ko!
ちえっ!!
Tsk!
Lie down!
What are you going to do with those hands?
Shut up and rest!

I found something, but I can't get the lid off.

That's ...
Aohi-ko!?
If it holds treasure, we're going to offer it to Risson, Demigod of the True Law.
That holds the sacred treasures the gods that cannot be seen gave our tribe!
Take your foot off that!


Like I said, it's something I found!
HAH!!
That's Ichirota ...
I don't want to fight you.
I'll offer you my thanks for carrying it here.
That's what all followers of the gods that cannot be seen say.
"We don't want to fight."

Whenever people have the nerve to tell me they don't want to fight, I just want to knock them down.
We live in an age when your intentions won't get you anywhere.
Will they avenge those who've been killed?
What can the gods that cannot be seen do for us now!?
Are they going to return the children who've been kidnapped!?
BAM

If you want it, come get it!
Aohiko !

That's more like it.
Fight fire with fire.
Stand back.

HUFF
A mantra
What're you trying to do ...
... making those strange sounds?

SFT
Huh
!?
Whoa
!
WHOOSH

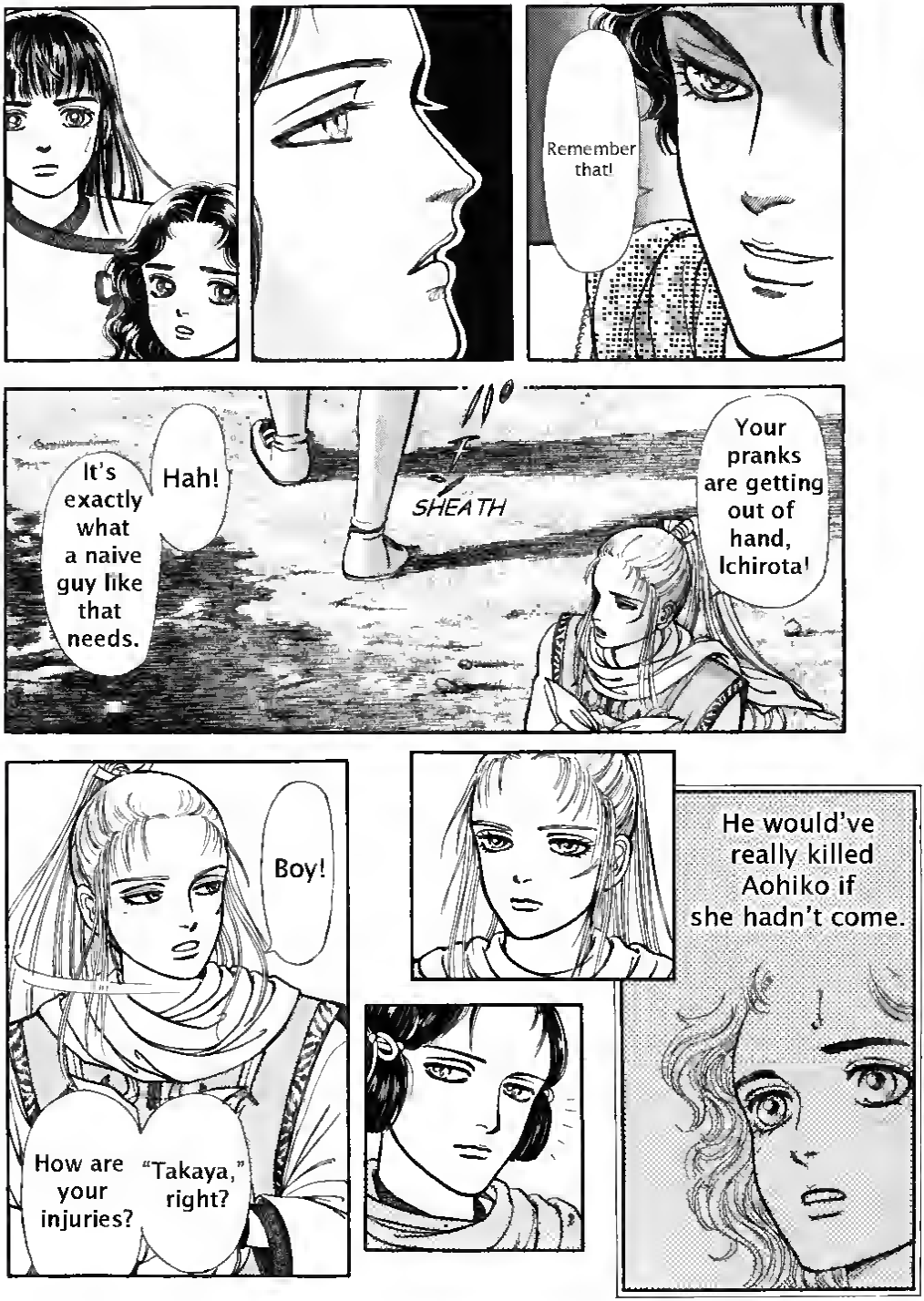
アゆ≒◎△ひゆ
Whoo-
oa!
ホ◎ン市母山◎

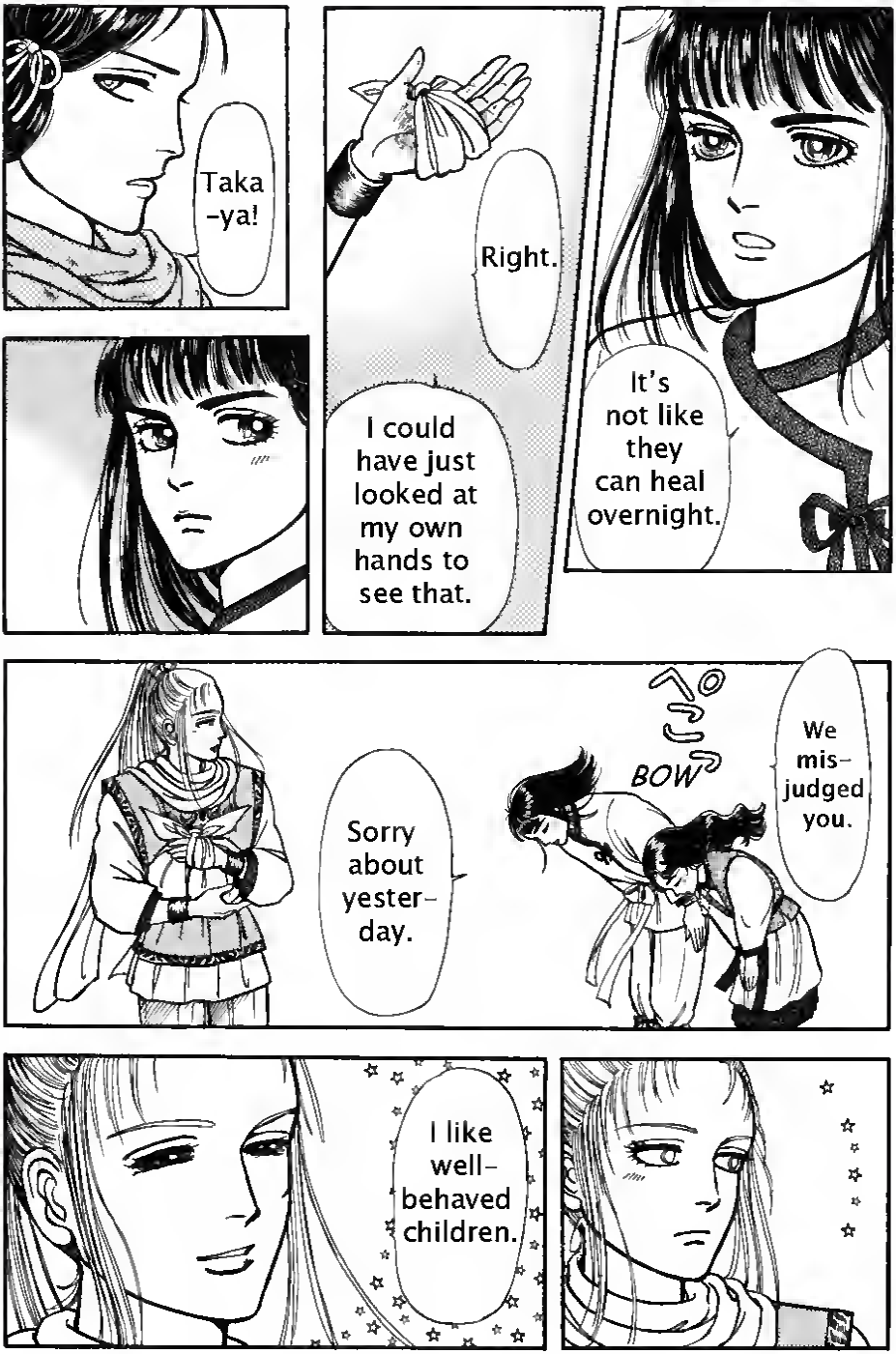
FWIP
THUD
Sorry !
Why you ...!

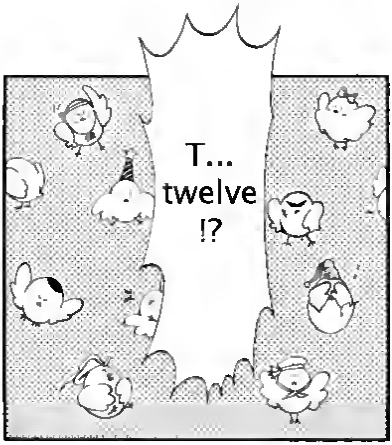
FWISH
STOP!!

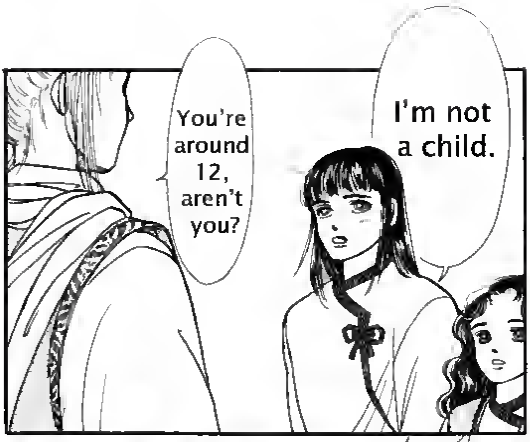
If you, a famous swordsman known to all followers of the demigods...
...kill an amateur, you will bring shame on yourself for generations to come.
I was just taken in by his strange magic and lost my senses!
Don't you have a response to him calling it "strange magic"?

That was a "mantra," wasn't it?
I've never heard or seen this before, but it sounds like the old tales of our tribe.
Yes ...
It is part of the wisdom given to us by the gods that cannot be seen.
FFT
...you'd be dead.
If Katsura hadn't come ...
HMPH!
It's a nice magic trick but a sorry excuse for a weapon.

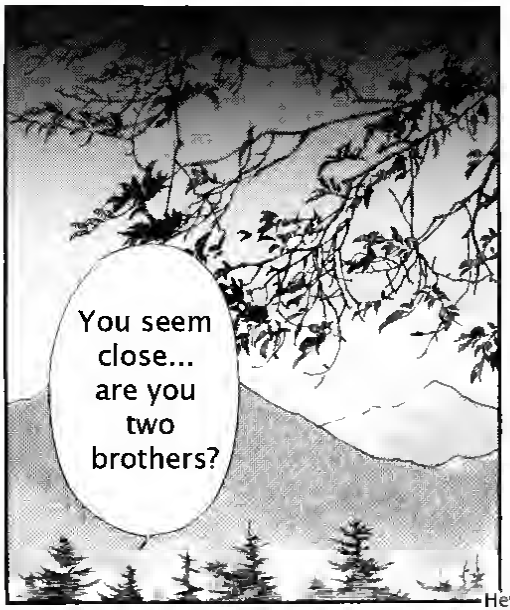

Remember that!
Hah!
It's exactly what a naive guy like that needs.
110°
F
SHEATH
Your pranks are getting out of hand, Ichirota!
Boy!
How are your injuries?
"Takaya," right?
He would've really killed Aohiko if she hadn't come.

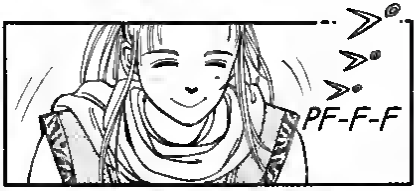

Taka-ya!
Right.
I could have just looked at my own hands to see that.
It's not like they can heal overnight.
Sorry about yesterday.
BOW
We mis-judged you.
I like well-behaved children.


T... twelve !?

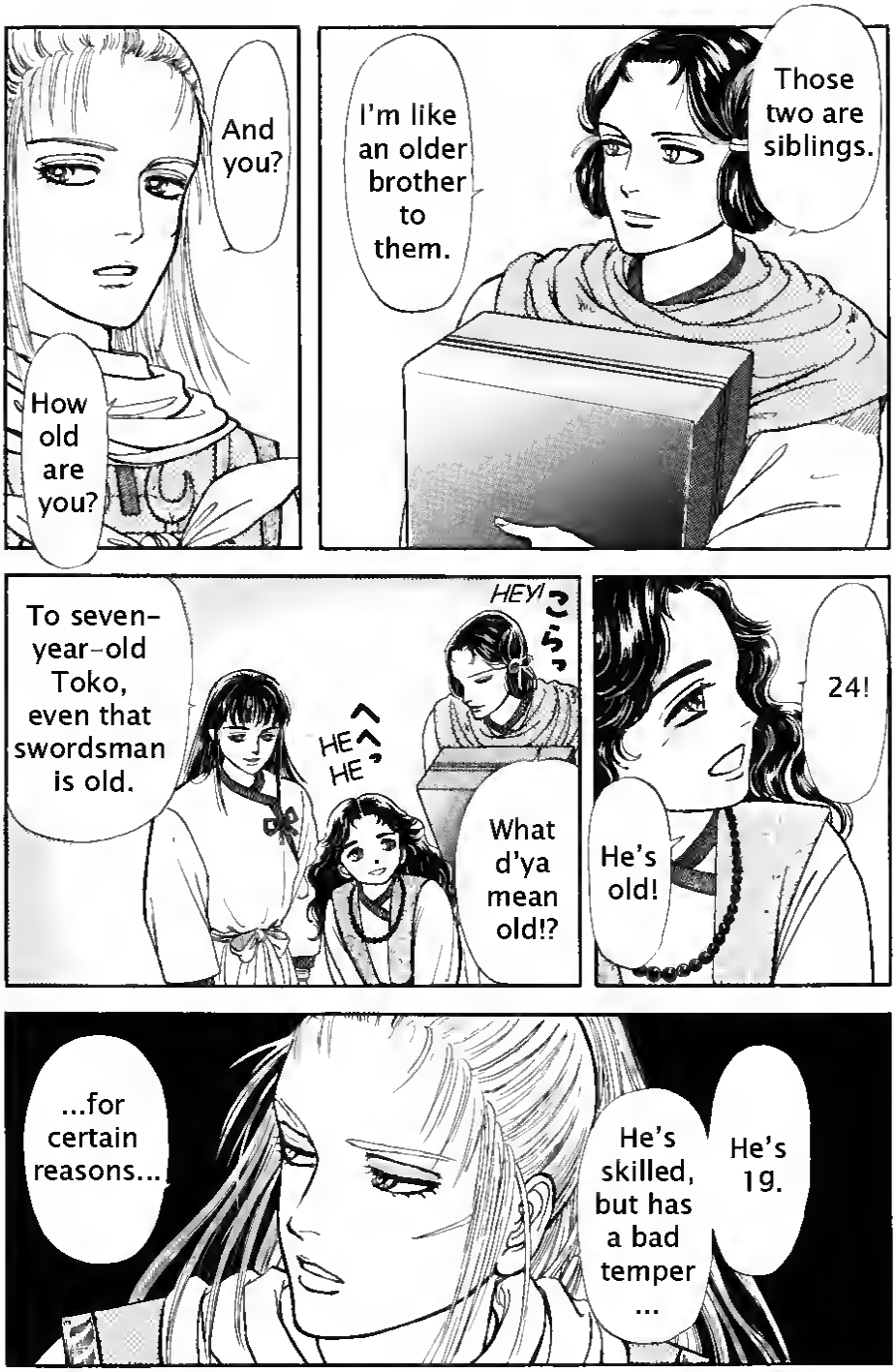

You're around 12, aren't you?
I'm not a child.

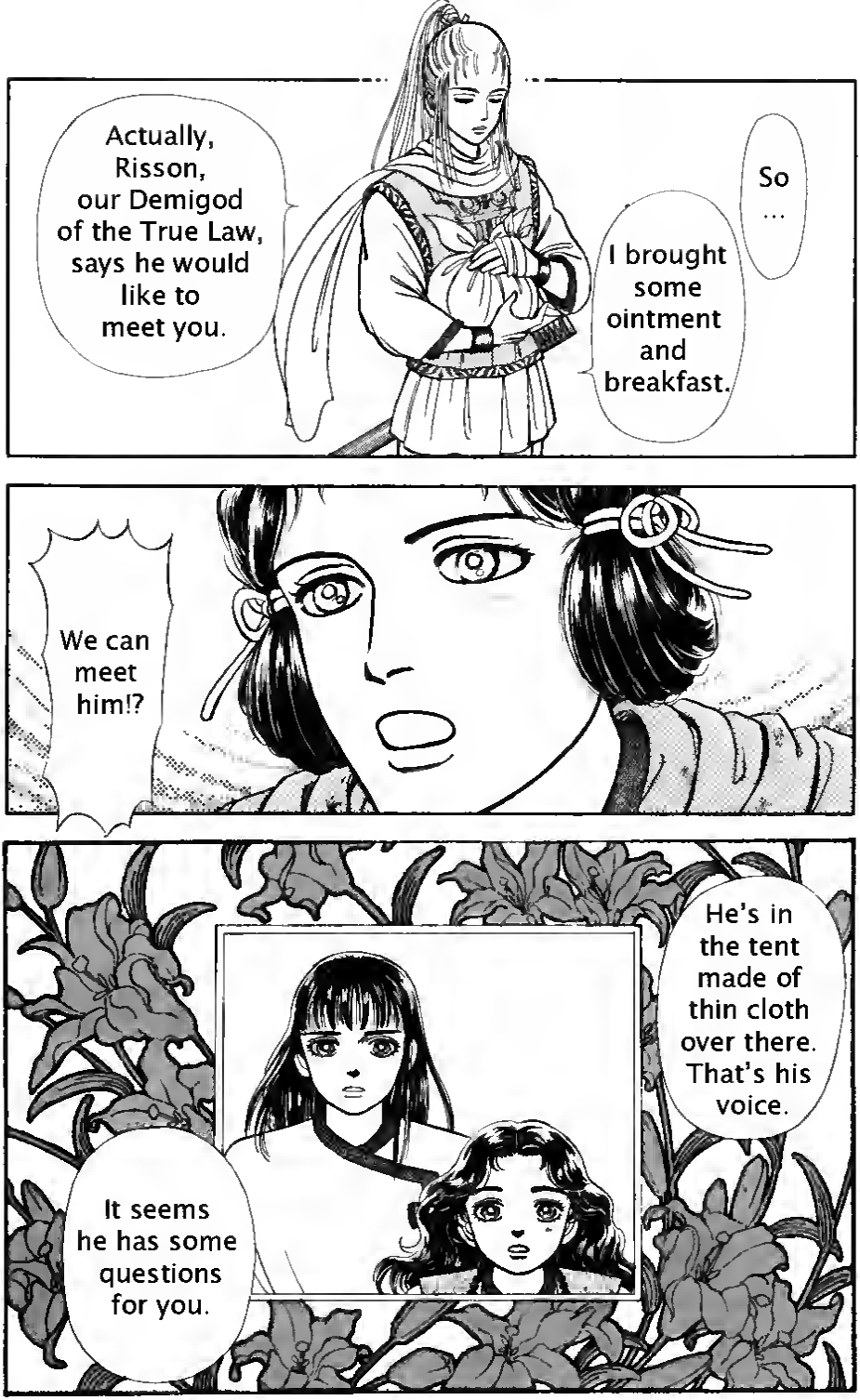
I'm 15!
(almost)

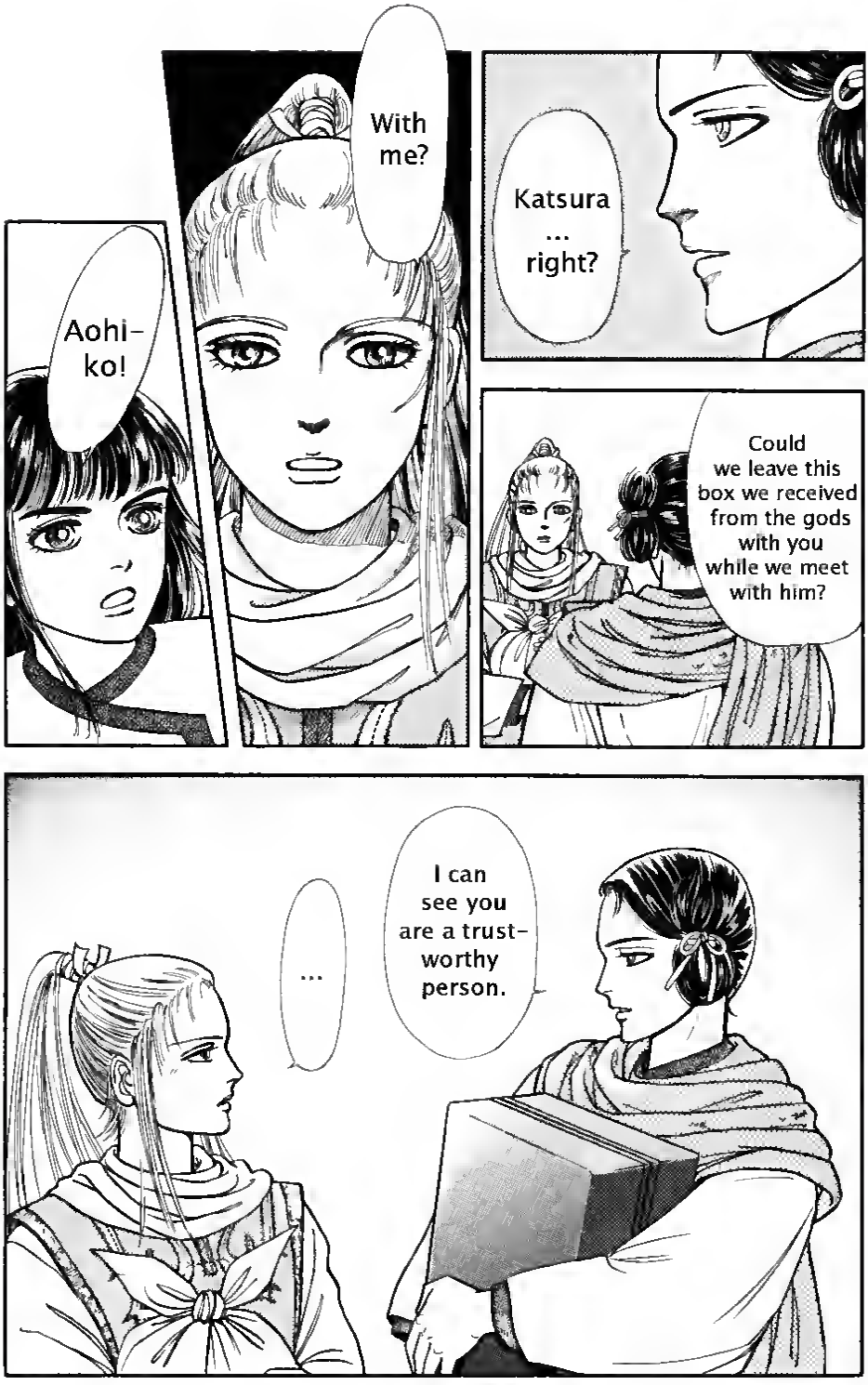

You seem close... are you two brothers?


PF-F-F

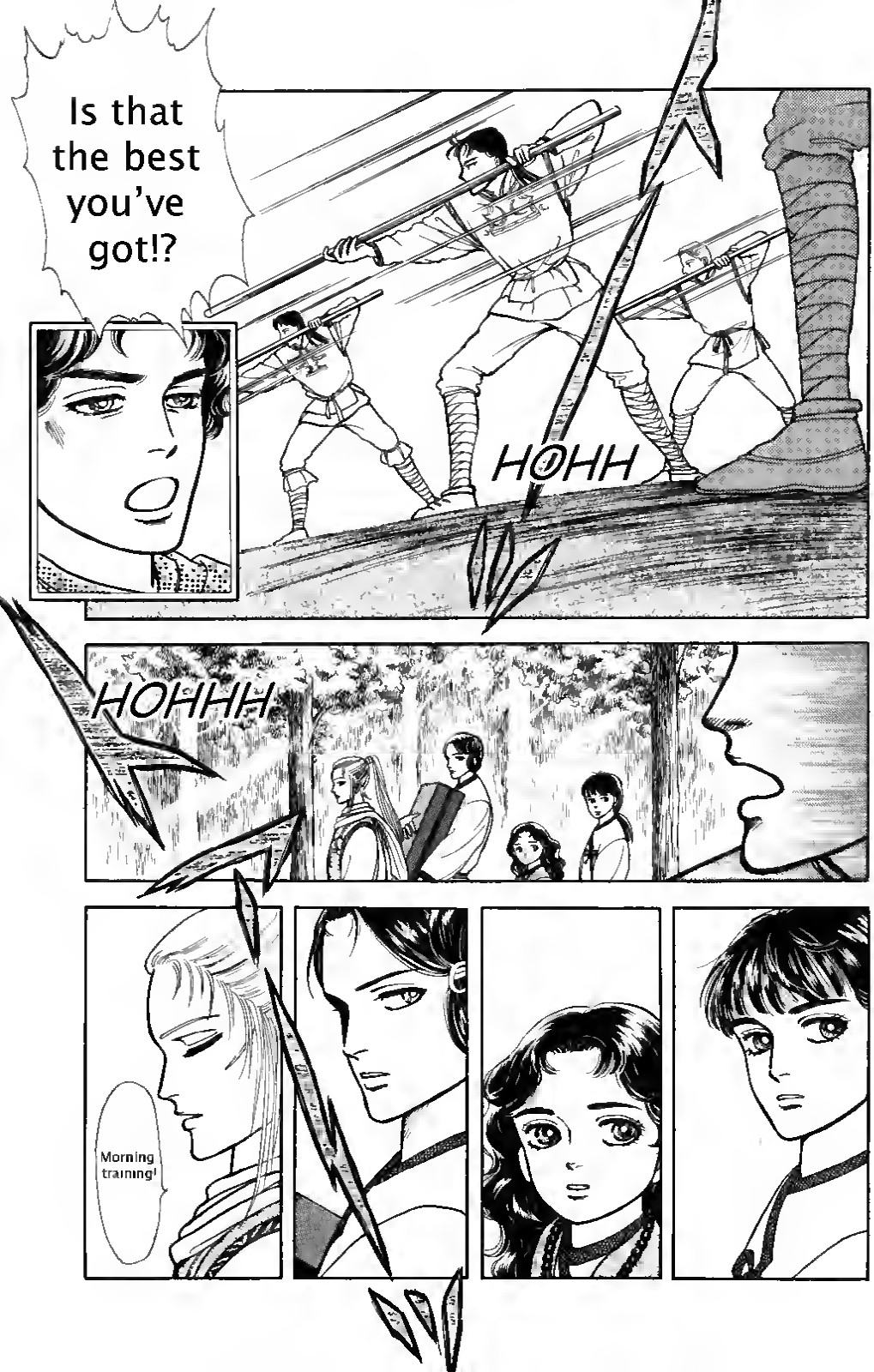
Look at that baby face.
If you're 15, you're just 2 years younger than me!
Hey, pouting just makes it worse...


And you?
How old are you?
Those two are siblings.
I'm like an older brother to them.
24!
He's old!
HEY!
こら
HE HE
To seven-year-old Toko, even that swordsman is old.
What d'ya mean old!?
He's 19.
He's skilled, but has a bad temper ...
...for certain reasons...


Actually, Risson, our Demigod of the True Law, says he would like to meet you.
So ...
I brought some ointment and breakfast.
We can meet him!?
He's in the tent made of thin cloth over there. That's his voice.
It seems he has some questions for you.

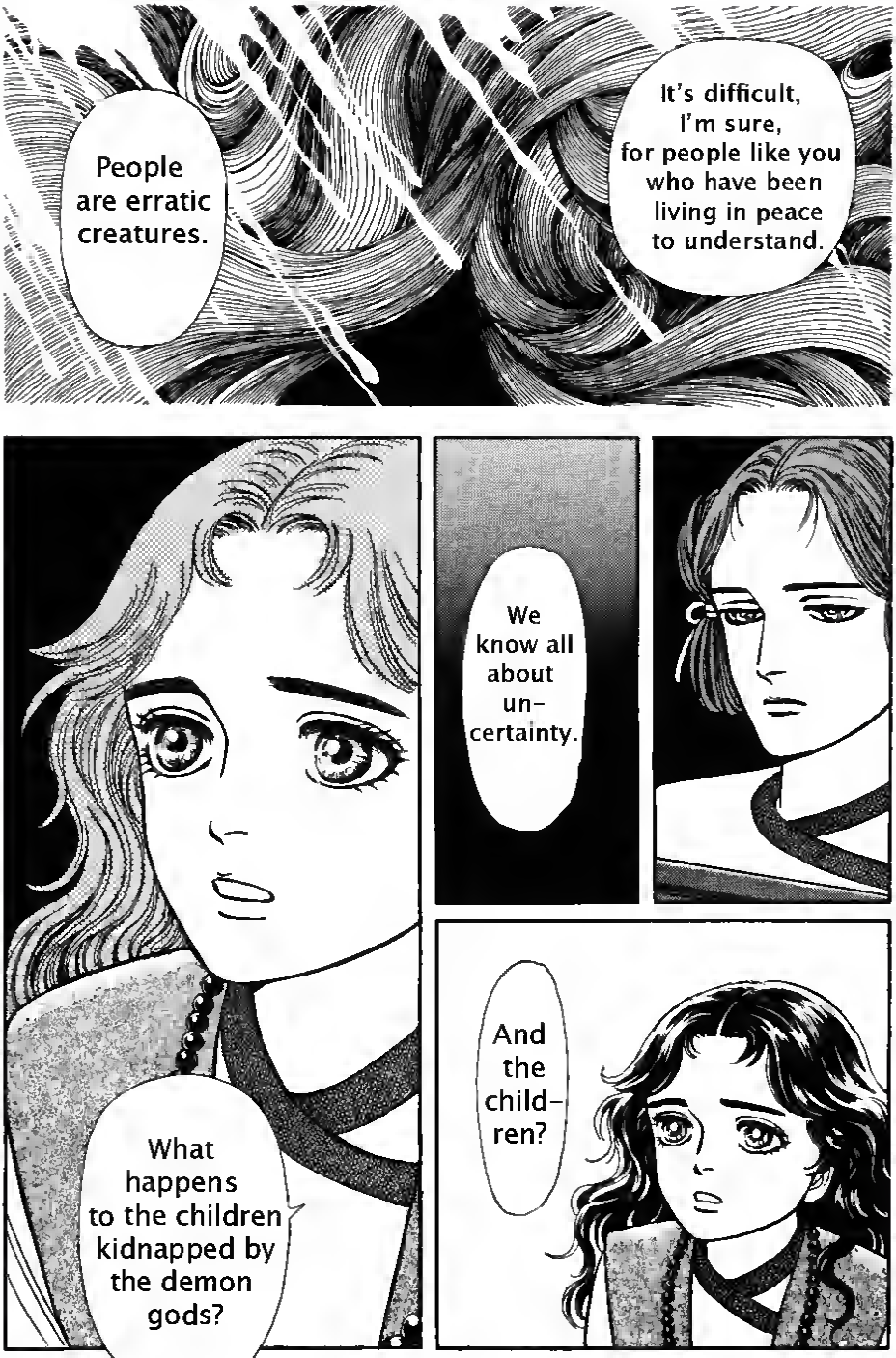

With me?
Aohi-ko!
Katsura ... right?
Could we leave this box we received from the gods with you while we meet with him?
...
I can see you are a trust-worthy person.

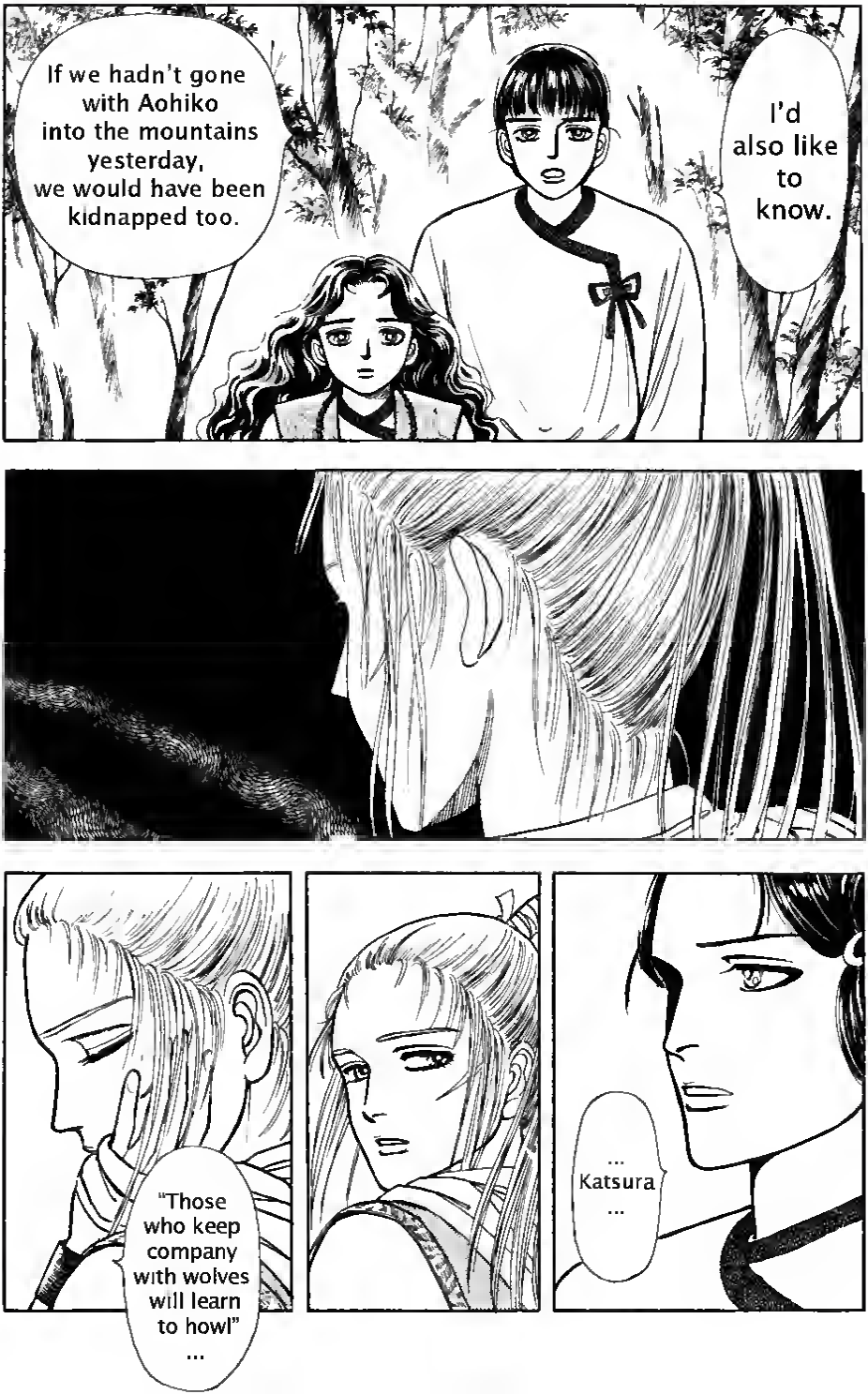
I'll guard it with my life!
All right!
I'm a pretty strong woman, hehe!
There isn't anyone here who would give me trouble, though...
HYAAH

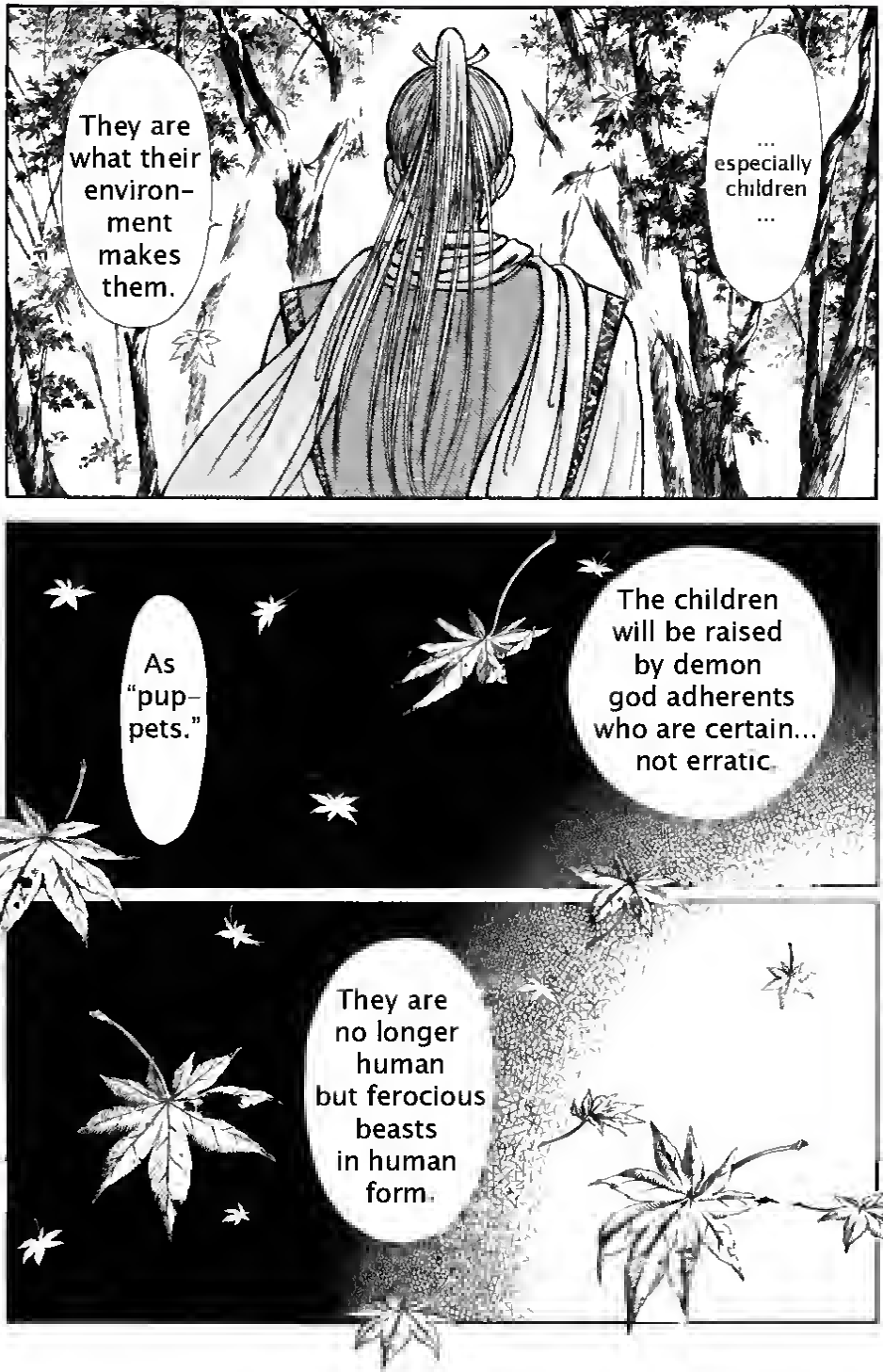

Is that the best you've got!?
HOHH
HOHHH
Morning training!

HYAAH
The men's primary work is becoming stronger.
All followers of the demon gods are strong...
...and reck-less!
People become their followers knowing they are evil gods?
Yes, many do...
They are fascinated by them ...
...and then drawn themselves ...

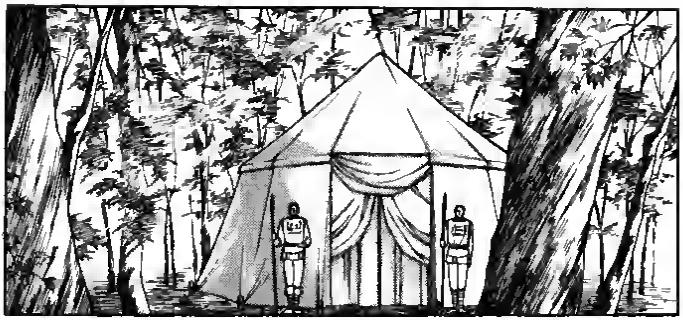
... to dark-ness, to vice, to evil ...
... to destruc-tion...


People are erratic creatures.
It's difficult, I'm sure, for people like you who have been living in peace to understand.
What happens to the children kidnapped by the demon gods?
We know all about un-certainty.
And the child-ren?

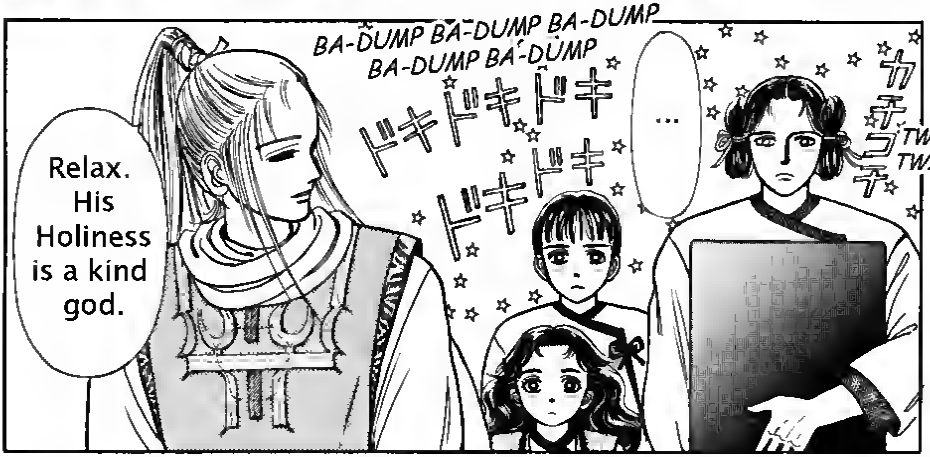

If we hadn't gone with Aohiko into the mountains yesterday, we would have been kidnapped too.
I'd also like to know.
"Those who keep company with wolves will learn to howl"
...
...
Katsura
...


They are what their environ-ment makes them.
... especially children ...
As "pup-pets."
The children will be raised by demon god adherents who are certain... not erratic.
They are no longer human but ferocious beasts in human form.

...
Tenpei and the others ...
...
So...
No!!
RUSTLE RUSTLE
The weak ones will succumb before the half year mark...
But once three years have passed, both their bodies and minds will belong to the demon gods...
The damage can be undone if they're rescued in a year or two...



He's in that tent.


BA-DUMP BA-DUMP BA-DUMP
BA-DUMP BA-DUMP
ドキドキドキ
ドキドキ
Relax. His Holiness is a kind god.
...
TWITCH TWITCH

...but something is different...

I don't feel "scared" ...

Yeah, but ...

Something...

I'll take good care of it!

It's heavy

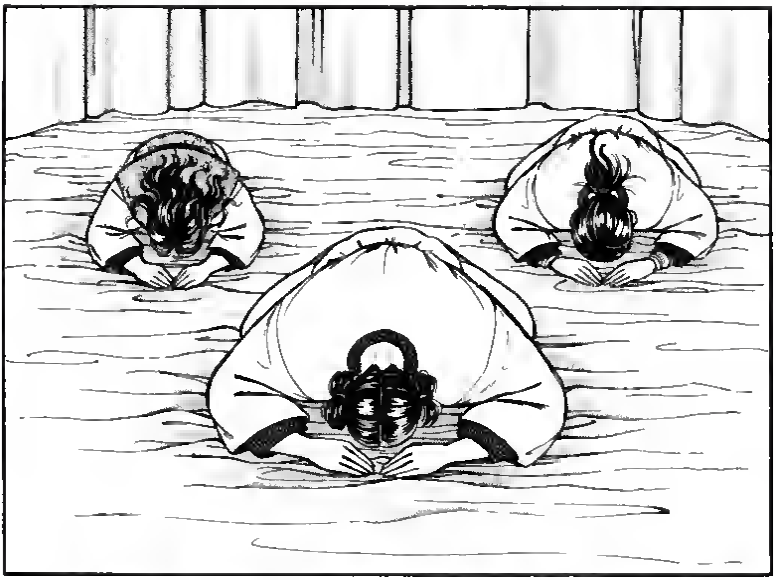
Here, I'll leave this with you!

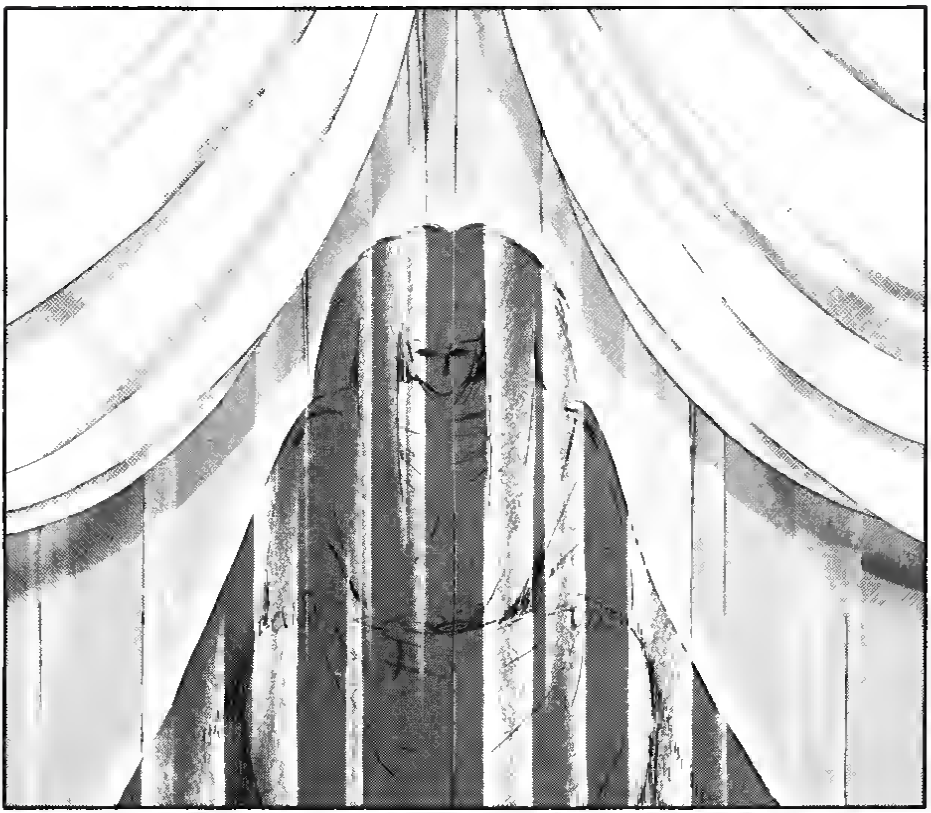
...in the color of the air...

...the density of the light...

...even the rustling of the leaves...!

RUSTLE RUSTLE





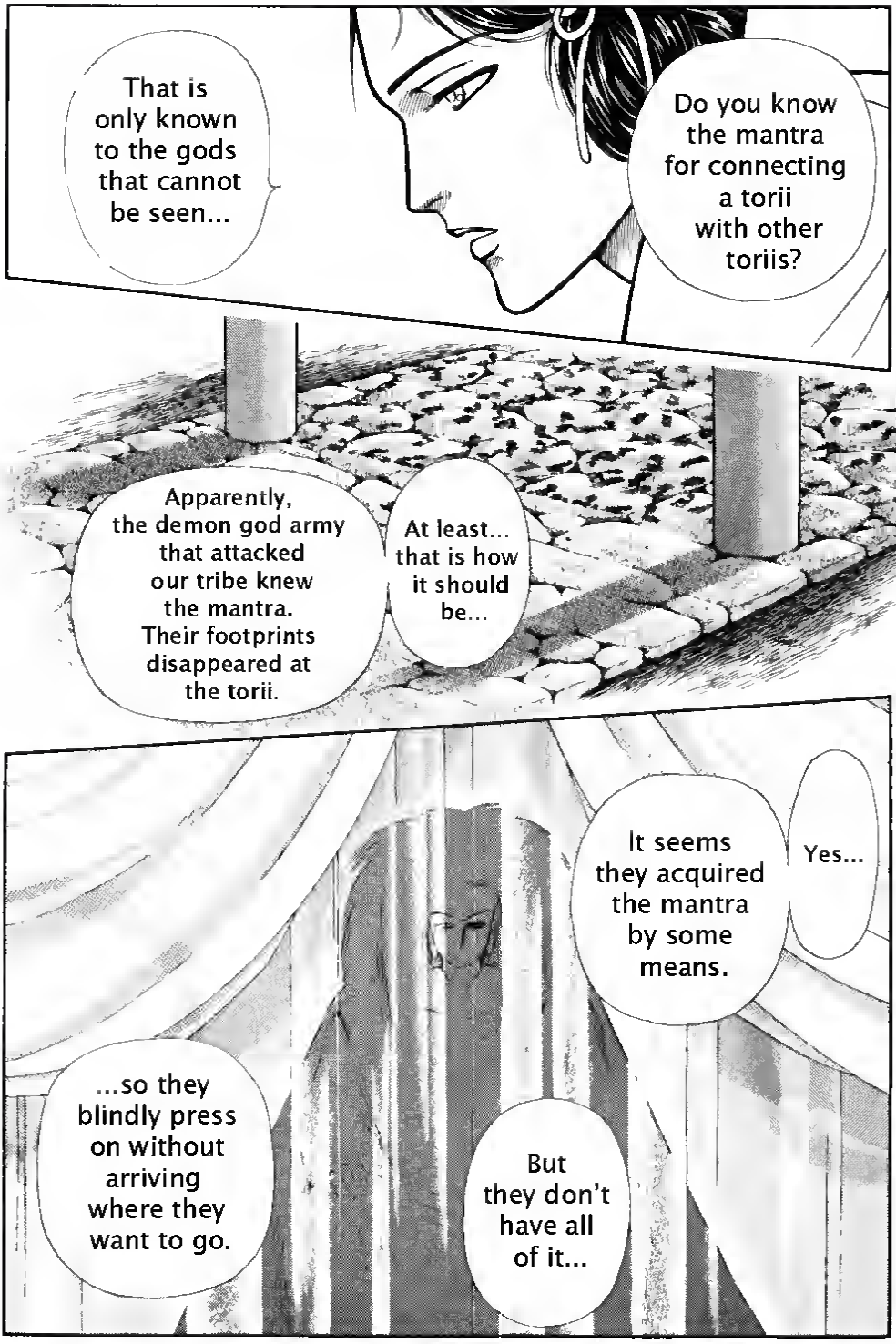
I am Risson, God of the True Law.
Th-this... is definitely not a human...
His aura is so intense...
Ah, what a pleasant aura...

Raise your heads and make yourselves comfortable.
I'd like to ask you a few questions about the gods that cannot be seen.
What a beautiful voice...

When and how did these gods reveal their existence?
I'll answer to the best of my ability...
...so I will tell you the legend about it.
It happened long before I was born...
It was when the earth was still cold and this island was connected to the great continent, with the north covered in ice and islands in the south...

The gods that cannot be seen descended in various locations in bird-shaped boats and built red gates.
Our ancestors called these gates torii, or bird dwellings.
We received all kinds of wisdom and sacred treasures through these torii ...
...guiding us from a brutish existence to the orderly human lives we enjoy today

Did the gods themselves ever appear through these torii?
According to legend, the gods that cannot be seen appeared at times through the torii as dazzling light like the sun.
...as light...
As dazzling light...
I had no idea... the gods that cannot be seen... had been seen...


That is only known to the gods that cannot be seen...
Do you know the mantra for connecting a torii with other toriis?
Apparently, the demon god army that attacked our tribe knew the mantra. Their footprints disappeared at the torii.
At least... that is how it should be...
Yes...
It seems they acquired the mantra by some means.
...so they blindly press on without arriving where they want to go.
But they don't have all of it...

...do they want to go!?
Blindly ...
Where ...
Why did you come to this peaceful land!?
Why did the gods that can be seen travel to this small land?
Forgive me...
...for my rude manner...
...

The scope of the war abroad is beyond expression.
The entire world is embroiled in a war between the demigods and demon gods.
This land was like another world... the only place where there was peace.

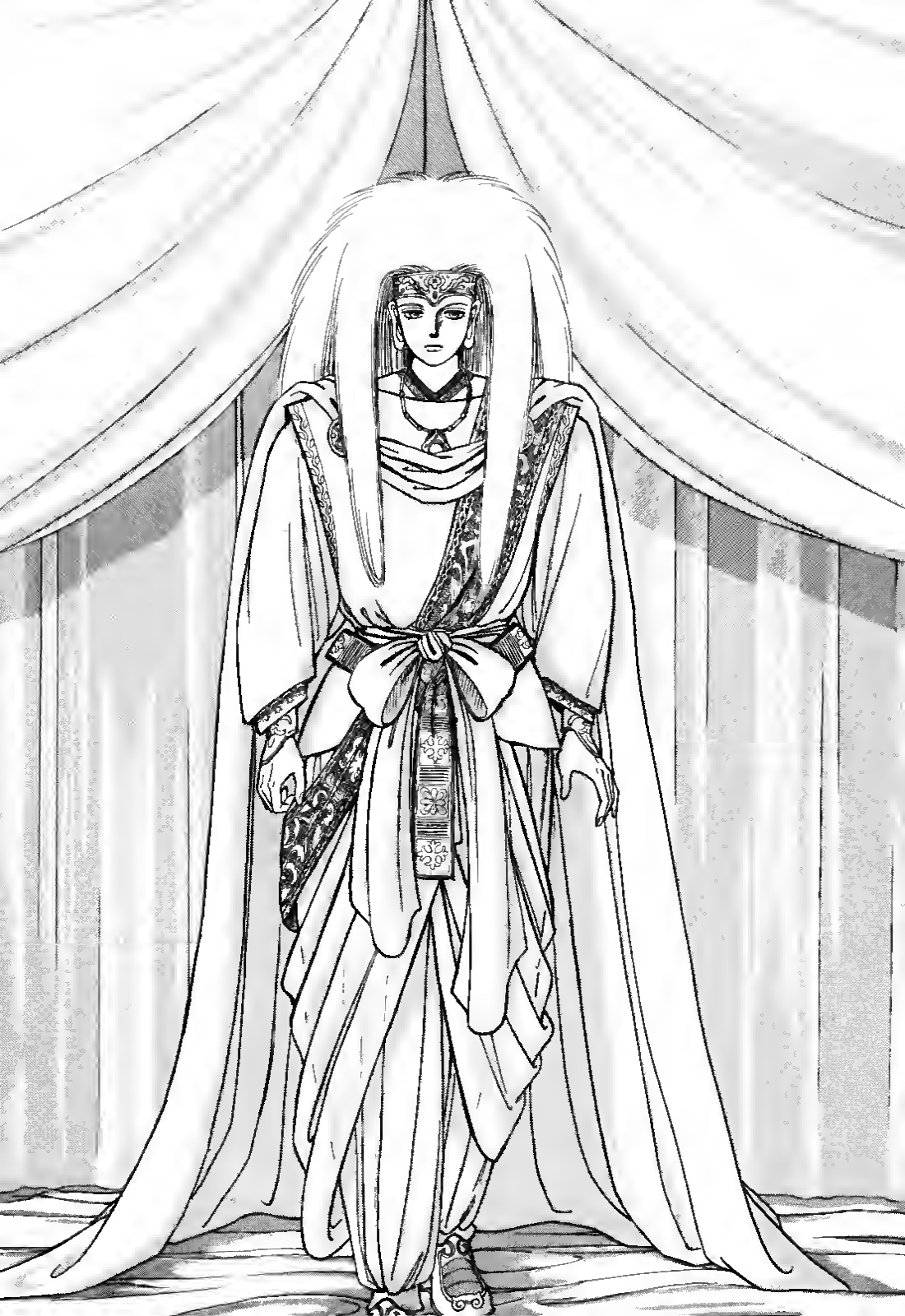
Why !?
Why !?
Why !?
Why !?
We have as many questions for you as you have for us...

Why did the gods that cannot be seen disappear... leaving these mountains and rivers to fall into ruin...?
We don't think the gods that cannot be seen disappeared.
They stopped directly communicating with our oracles after the great flood about a hundred years ago...
...but we think that is because they had given us all the wisdom we needed.

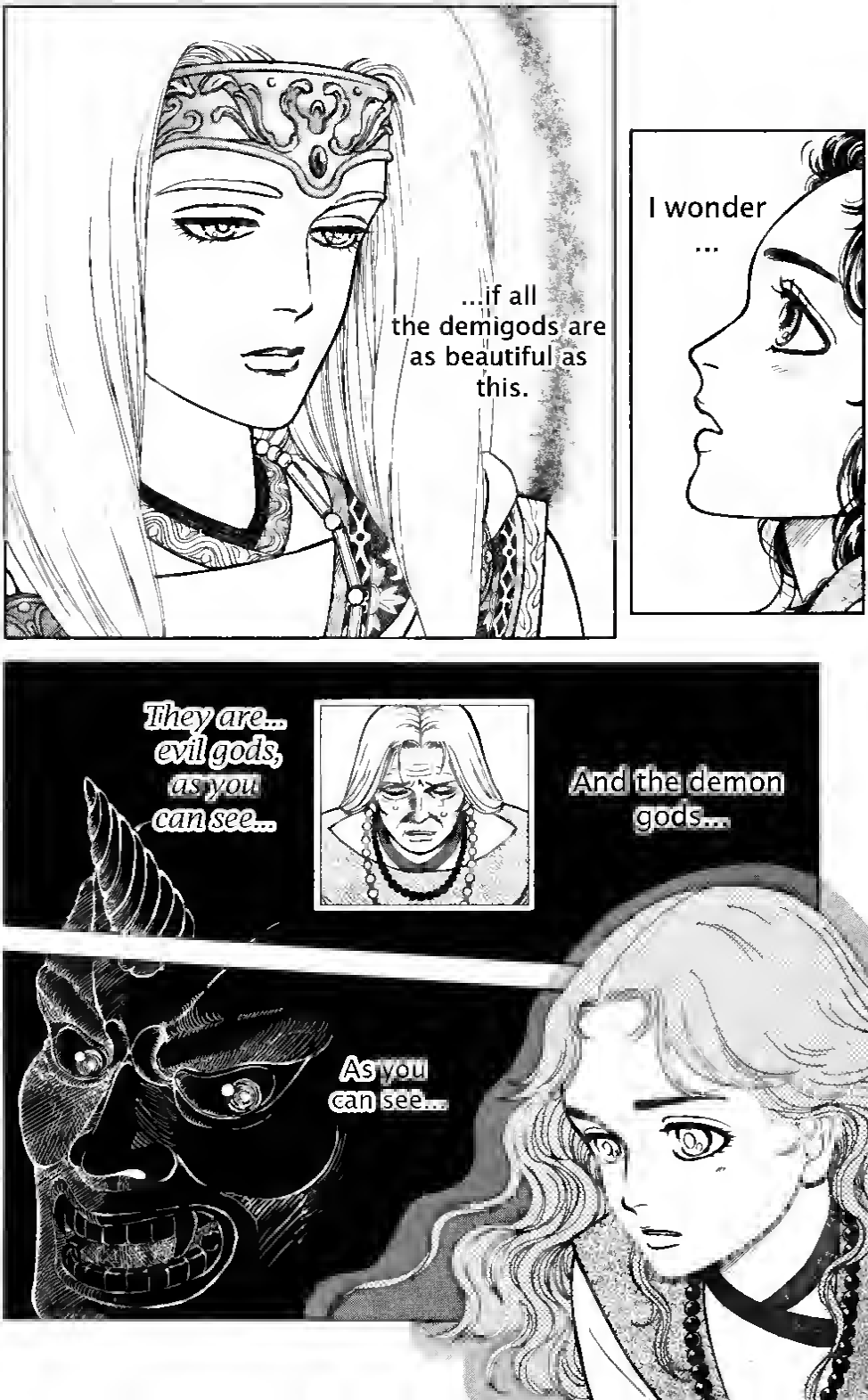
If they were still here, they wouldn't have allowed such a horrible thing to happen!
That's not what I think!
...
Other-wise, why...!?
Yeah!

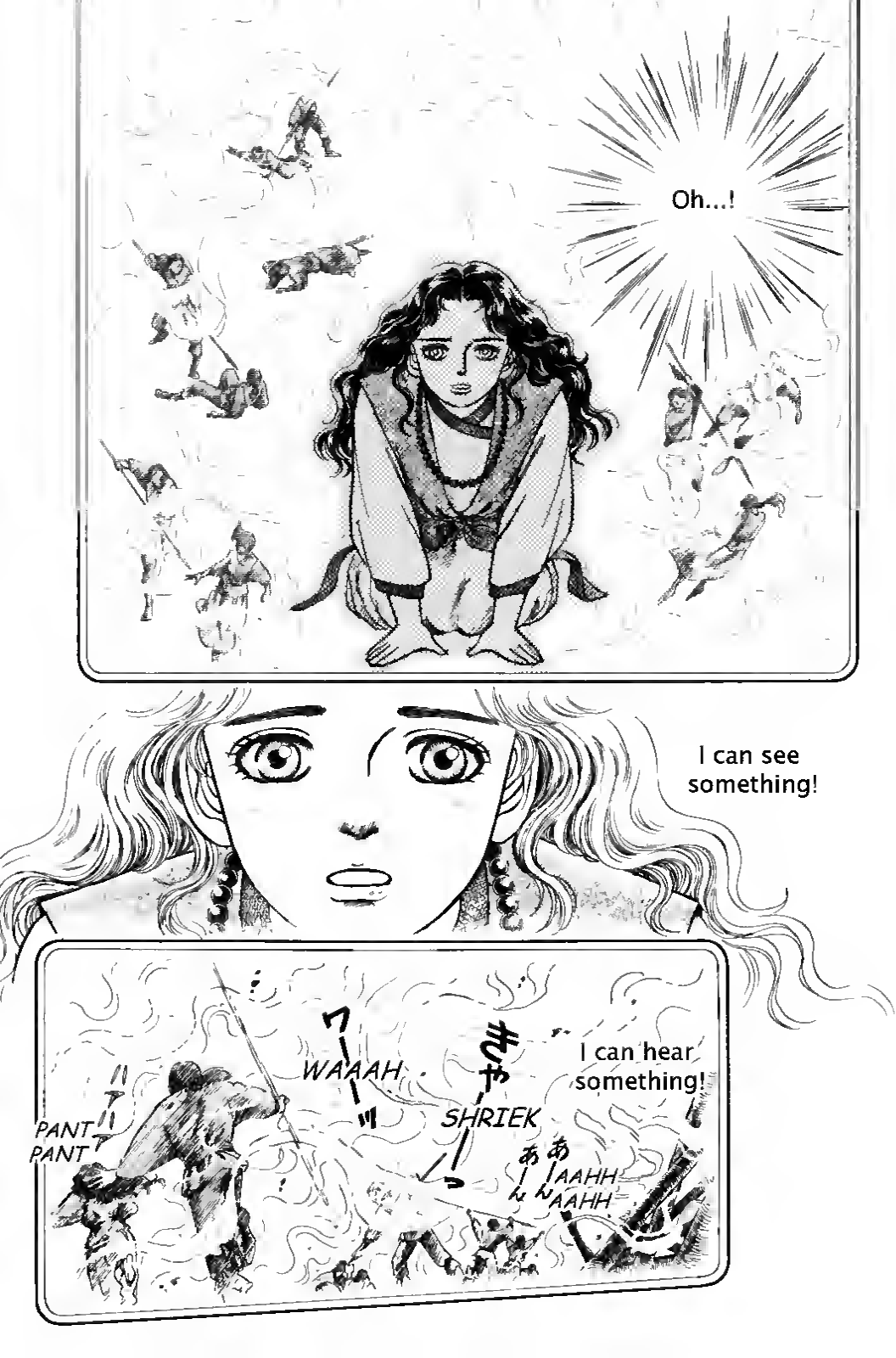
After... the great flood ...?
In unspeakable despair...
I can sense that... he's... sad...
Your Holi-ness!
I hope to talk with you again.
Thank you for every-thing ...

I want to see ...
Taka-ya!
Could you ...
...show us your form!?
All right.
SWISH



Wow...!
A beauty
beyond
human
measure.

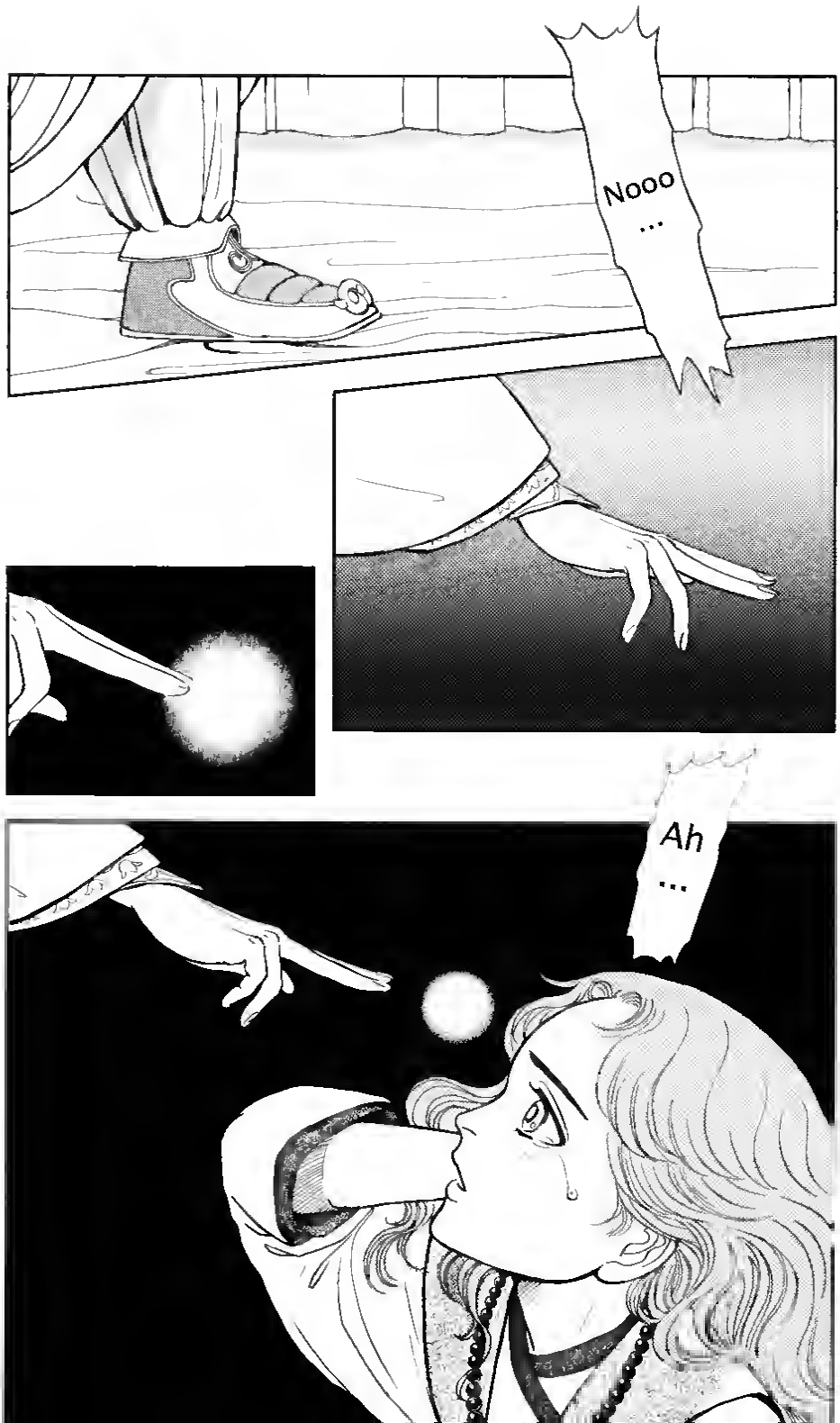

...if all the demigods are as beautiful as this.
I wonder ...
They are... evil gods, as you can see...
And the demon gods...
As you can see...


Oh...!
I can see something!
I can hear something!
PANT PANT
WAAAH
SHRIEK
AAHH AAHH

Toko!?
Ah!
Ahh!
What is it!?
Toko!

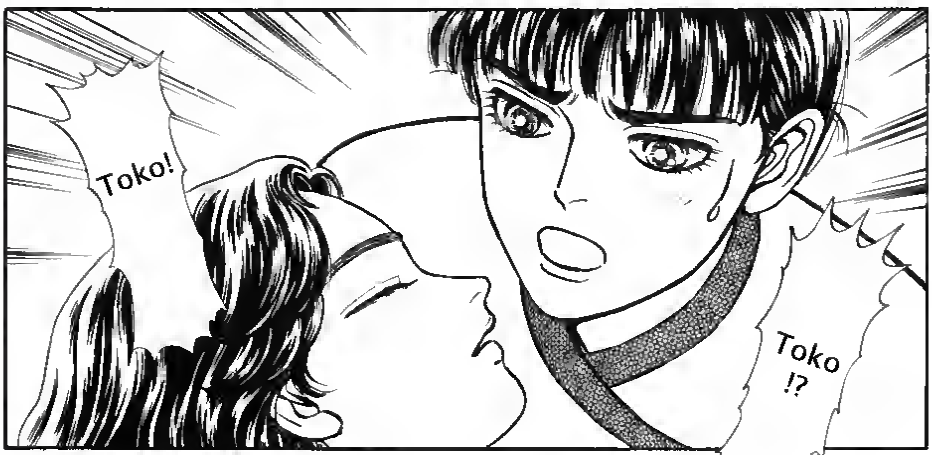
ハア
ハア PANT
PANT
PANT
Is that ...!?
Is that ...!?
いやあっ!!
NOOO!!

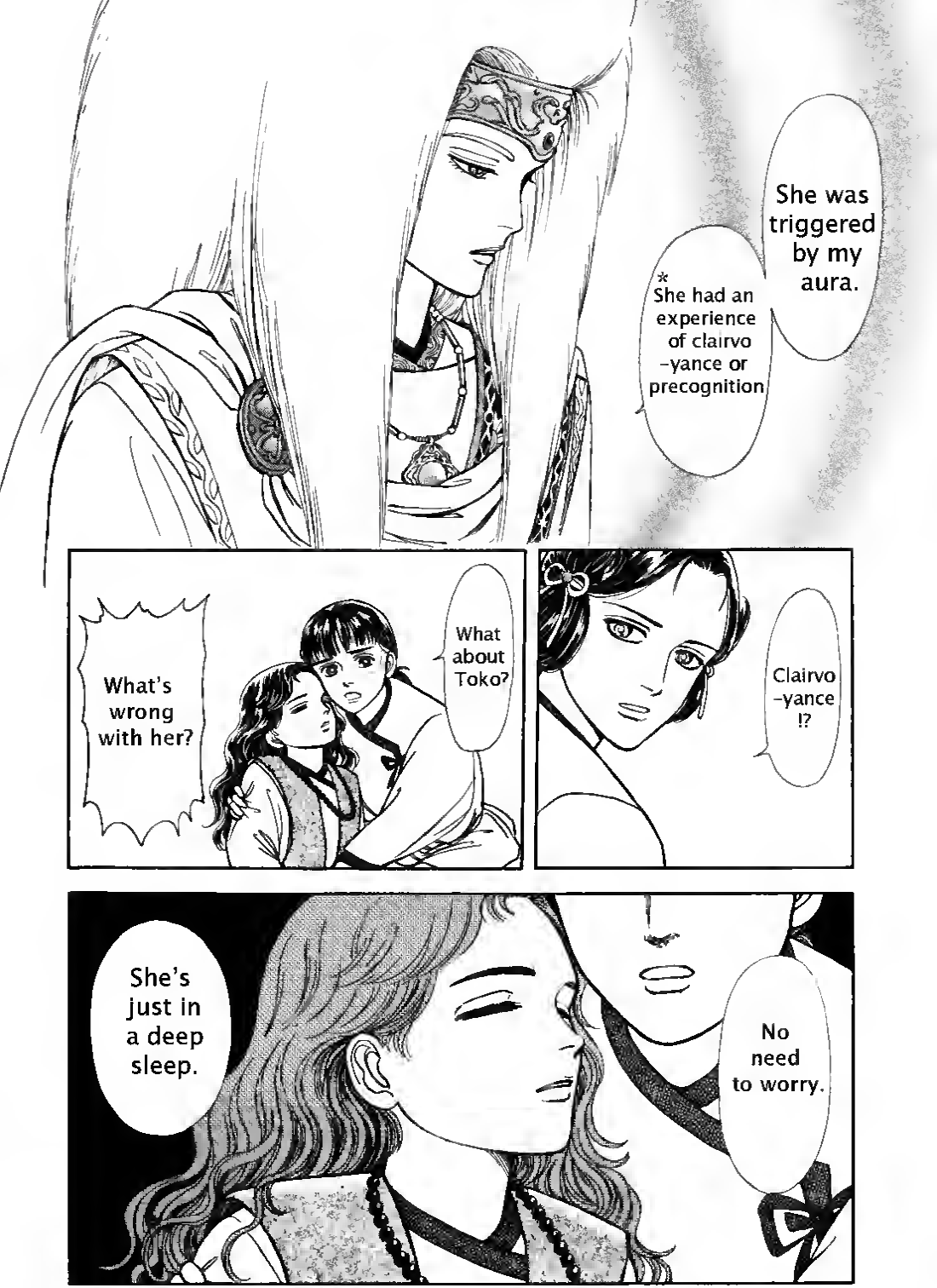
レヤあっ!!
NOOO!!
Make it go away!
Make it go away!
Toko!
Toko!?
What's wrong?


Nooo
...
Ah
...

Is that... me!?
Ah!
They're going to kidnap me!
NOOO!

Toko!
Wake up! Toko!
Your Holi-ness!
What happe-ned!?

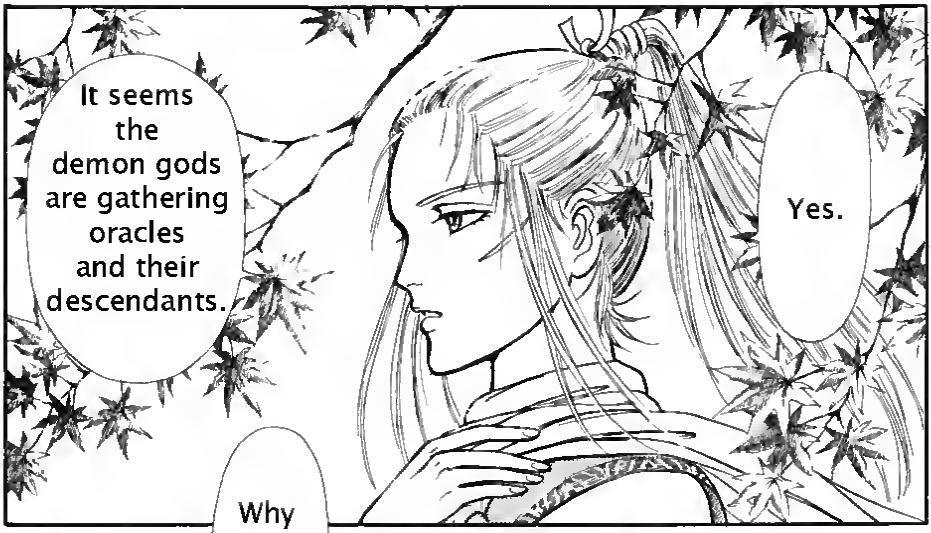

Toko!
Toko !?


She was triggered by my aura.
*She had an experience of clairvo-yance or precognition
What about Toko?
What's wrong with her?
Clairvo-yance!?
No need to worry.
She's just in a deep sleep.

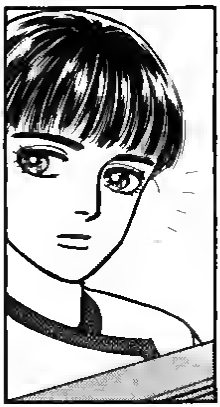
* Clairvoyance: seeing things that are normally imperceptible
Precognition: foreseeing the future

Toko
!
Toko
!
Was her mother an oracle?
N-no ...
... she wasn't.

This child has the potential to become an oracle.
Be careful. The demon gods especially want children like this.


It seems the demon gods are gathering oracles and their descendants.
Yes.

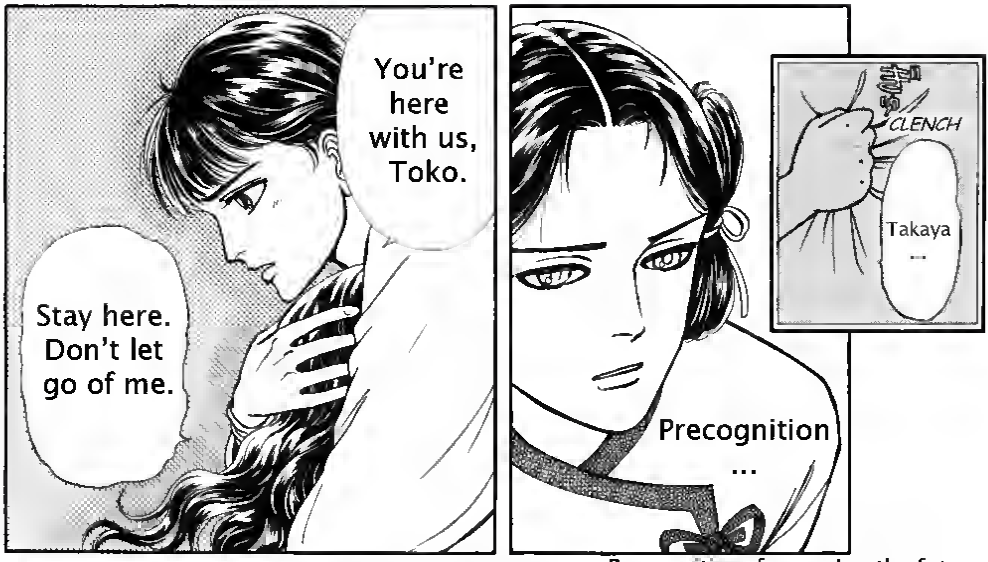
Why would they...!?
None of us has asked the demon gods about it,so we don't know for sure.
We think it may be to acquire the wisdom of the gods that cannot be seen.



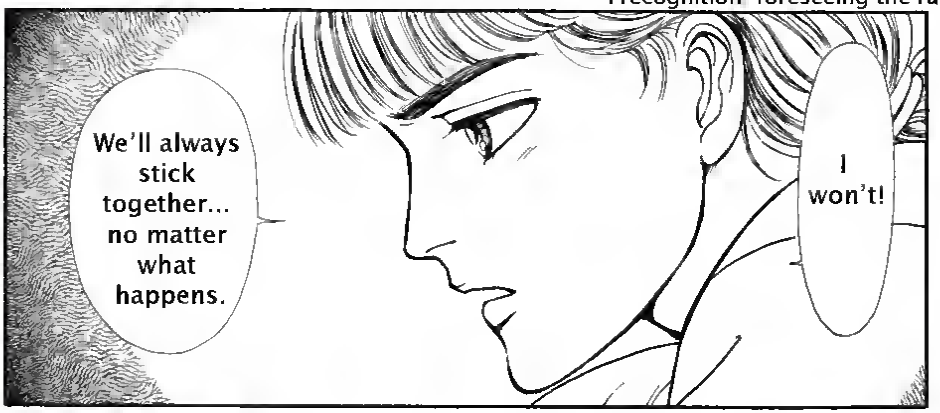
That may be best for her.
Toko still doesn't know most of it.

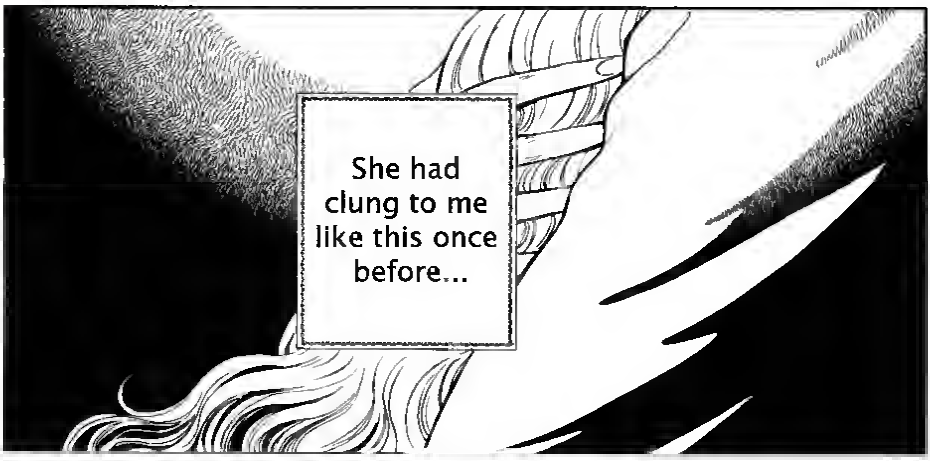
Toko!
Takaya!
I'm scared!
Takaya!
Takaya!
Takaya!

Toko ...
What did you see, Toko!?
Some place was attacked ...
... everyone was killed...
...I was kidnapped ...



Precognition: foreseeing the future





It was the winter before last...
Snow was blowing like crazy that night...
She burst into tears for no reason...
... and wouldn't stop crying ...
All I could do was hold her...

I don't know...

I don't know why...

I'm just sad...

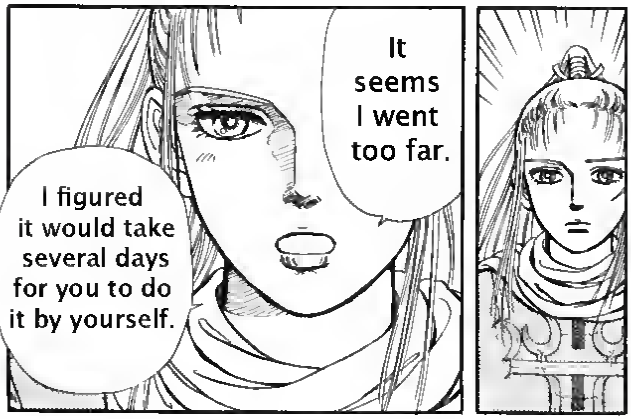
So, so, so sad.

It's your fault I'm a crybaby ...
...and that I get lonely easily...
...and that I'm a spoiled brat. It's all your fault.
... Uh huh.
...

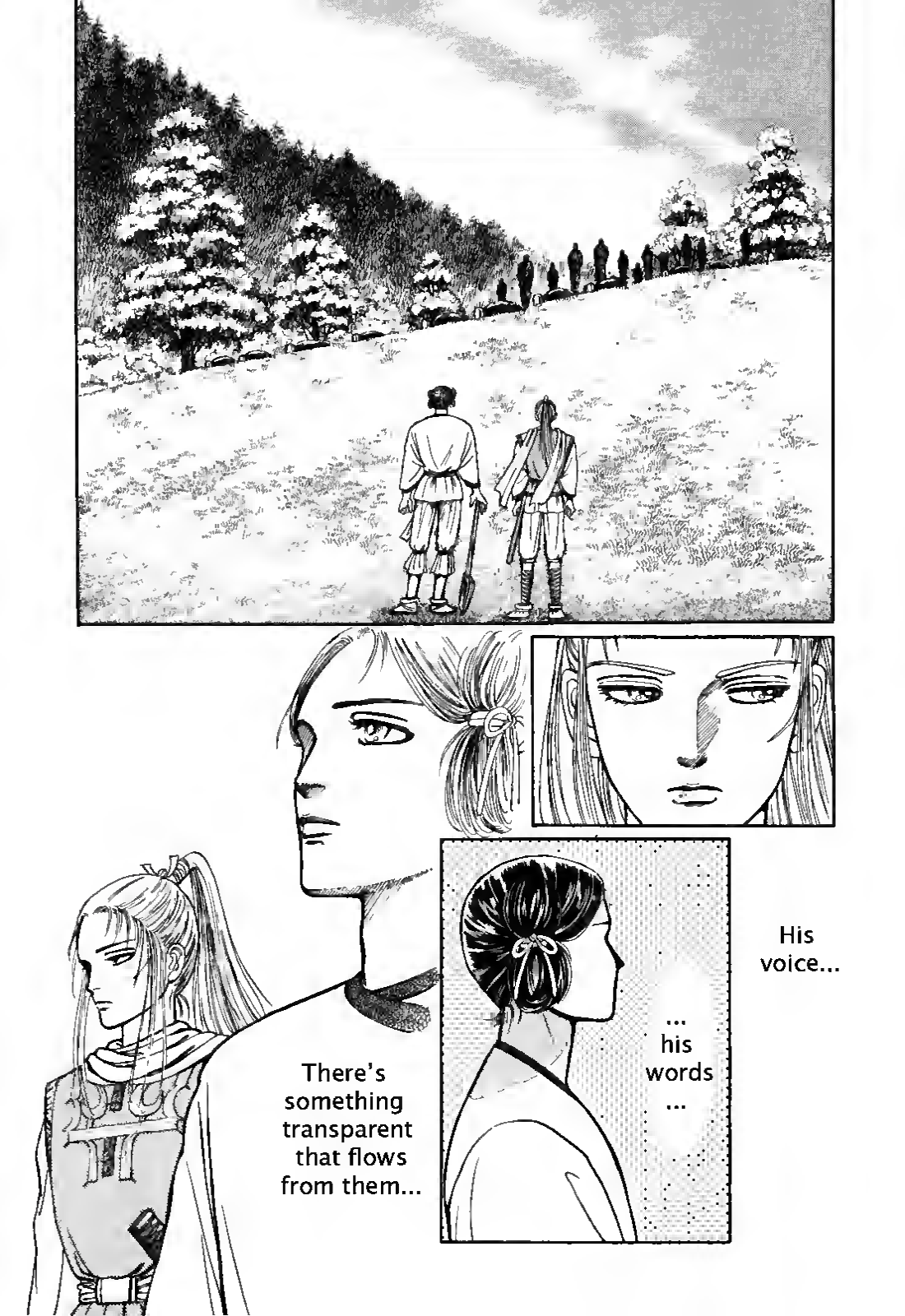
Because you're always there...
... Uh huh.
Always ...
Always there for me...
I'll protect you!

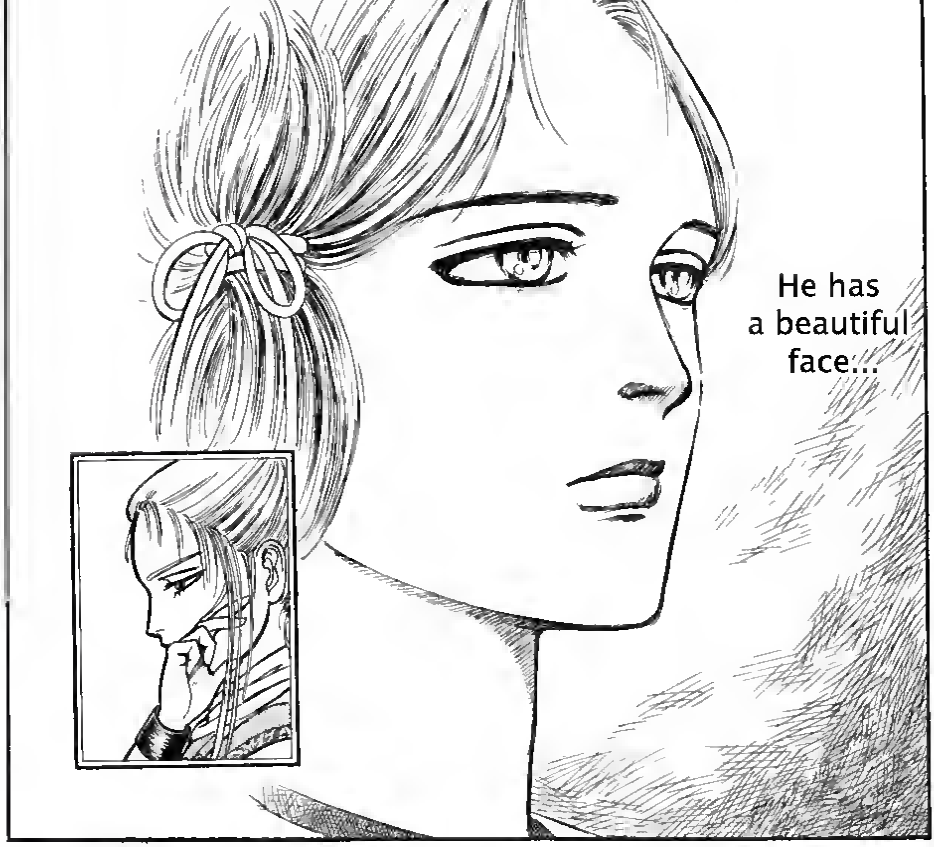
Aohi-
ko!
I gave orders to bury your people at the top of the hill.
I had them all work toge-ther ...
...to get it done quick-ly!
They should have finished and started gathering flowers for the graves by now.

... Toko will die ...

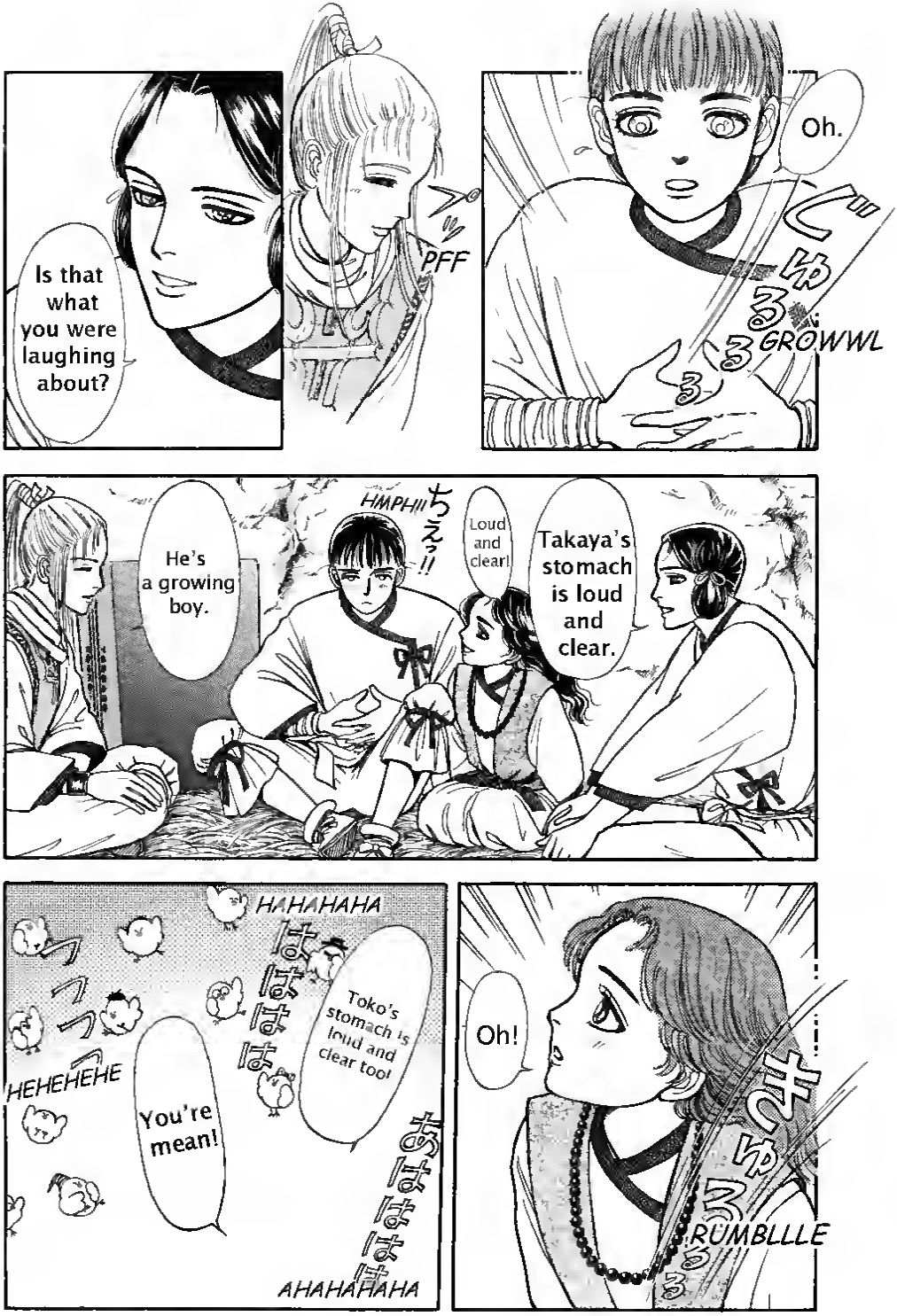


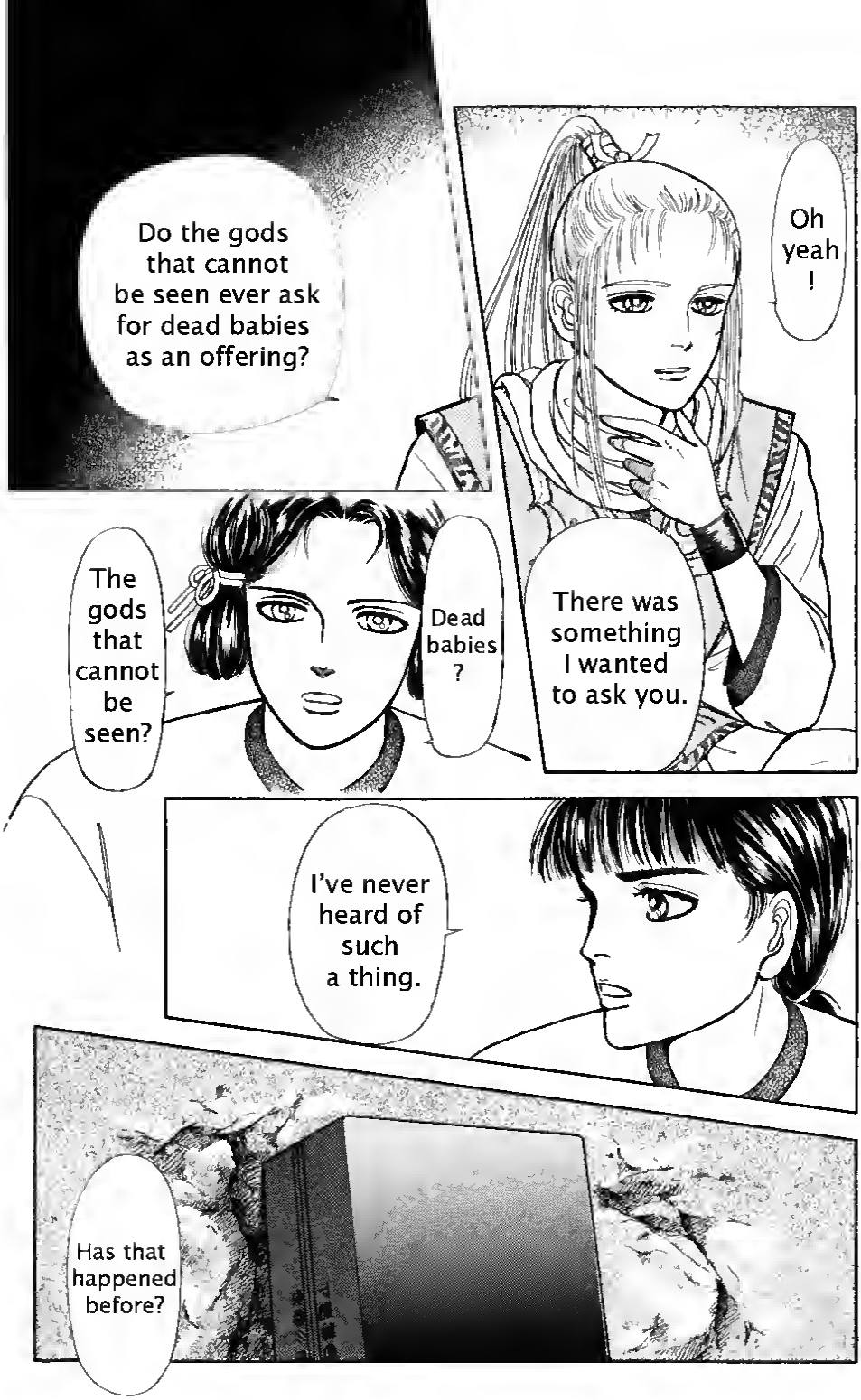
...I just thought digging the graves was the least I could do as a survivor.
No ...
I meant just what I said... If you feel the same way, don't glare at me.
Do you think we don't mourn their deaths!?
We feel the same way!
...but grief is a curious thing. It subsides as it accumulates when shared with others.
Anger doubles as it accumulates...

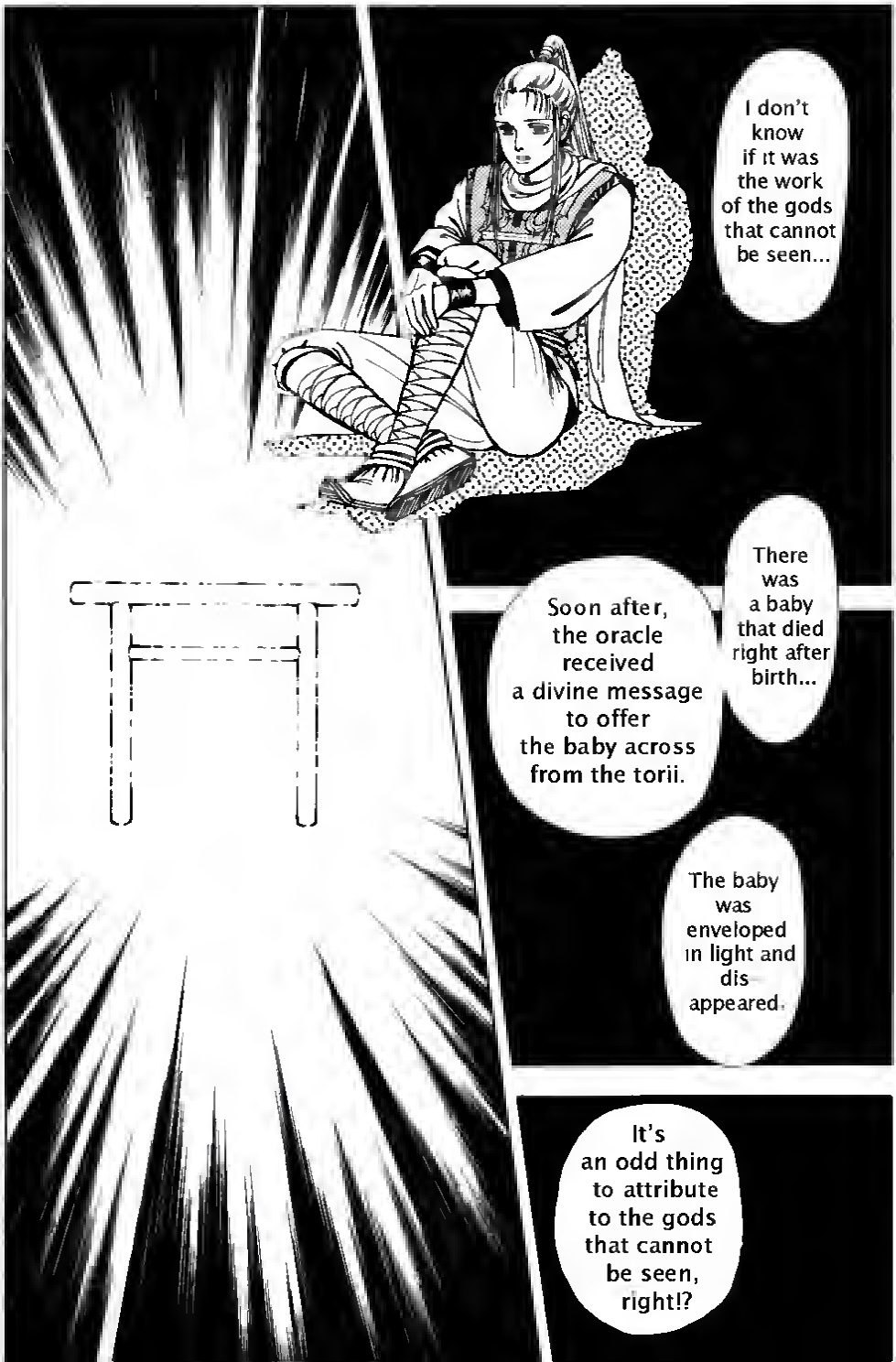

There's something transparent that flows from them...
... his words ...
His voice...

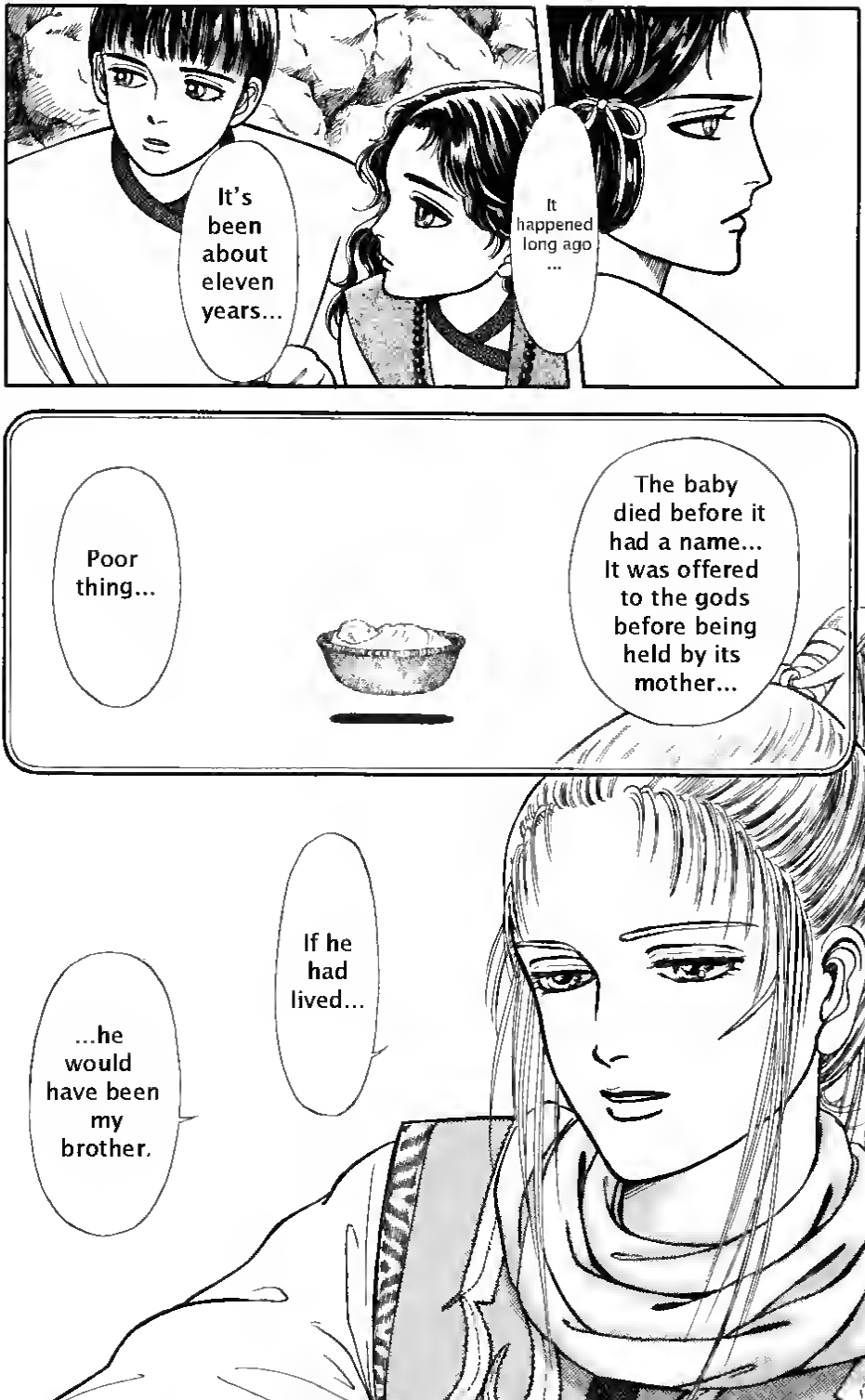

He has
a beautiful
face...

I can't help it.
But Taka-ya!
Don't laugh!
クスクス
PFFFT
Kids. Crying one minute, laughing the next!
Looks like you're feeling better.
Where did you go!?
Aohiko !
Ha! There you go again with the long faces.
She said they dug the graves for us... so I went to see them.

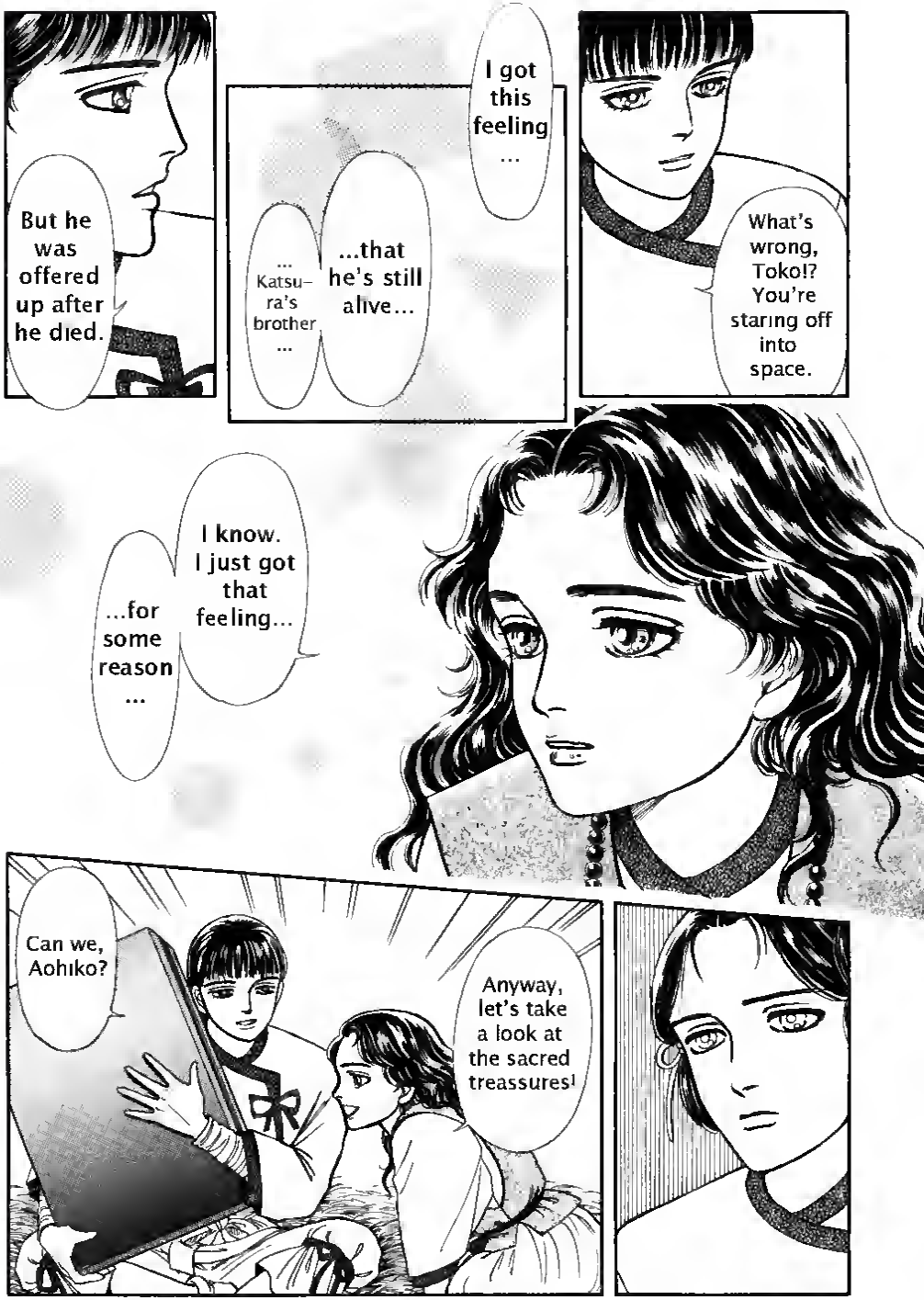

Is that what you were laughing about?
PFF
Oh.
GROWWL
He's a growing boy.
HMPH!!
Loud and clear!
Takaya's stomach is loud and clear.
HAHAHAHA
Toko's stomach is loud and clear too!
You're mean!
HEHEHEHE
AHAHAHAHA
Oh!
RUMBLLLE


Do the gods that cannot be seen ever ask for dead babies as an offering?
Oh yeah !
There was something I wanted to ask you.
Dead babies ?
The gods that cannot be seen?
I've never heard of such a thing.
Has that happened before?

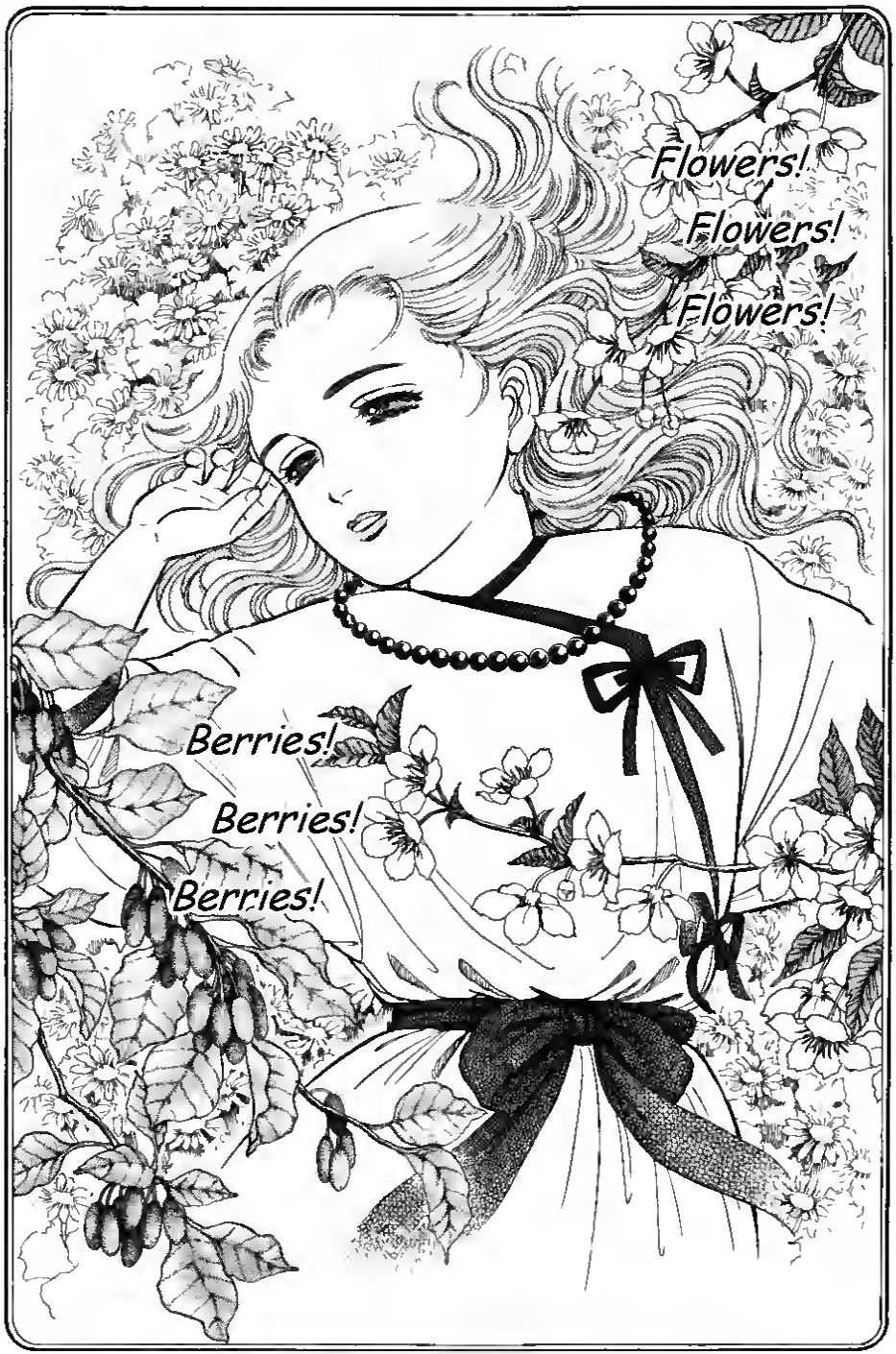

I don't know if it was the work of the gods that cannot be seen...
There was a baby that died right after birth...
Soon after, the oracle received a divine message to offer the baby across from the torii.
The baby was enveloped in light and disappeared.
It's an odd thing to attribute to the gods that cannot be seen, right!?


It's been about eleven years...
It happened long ago ...
Poor thing...
The baby died before it had a name... It was offered to the gods before being held by its mother...
If he had lived...
...he would have been my brother.

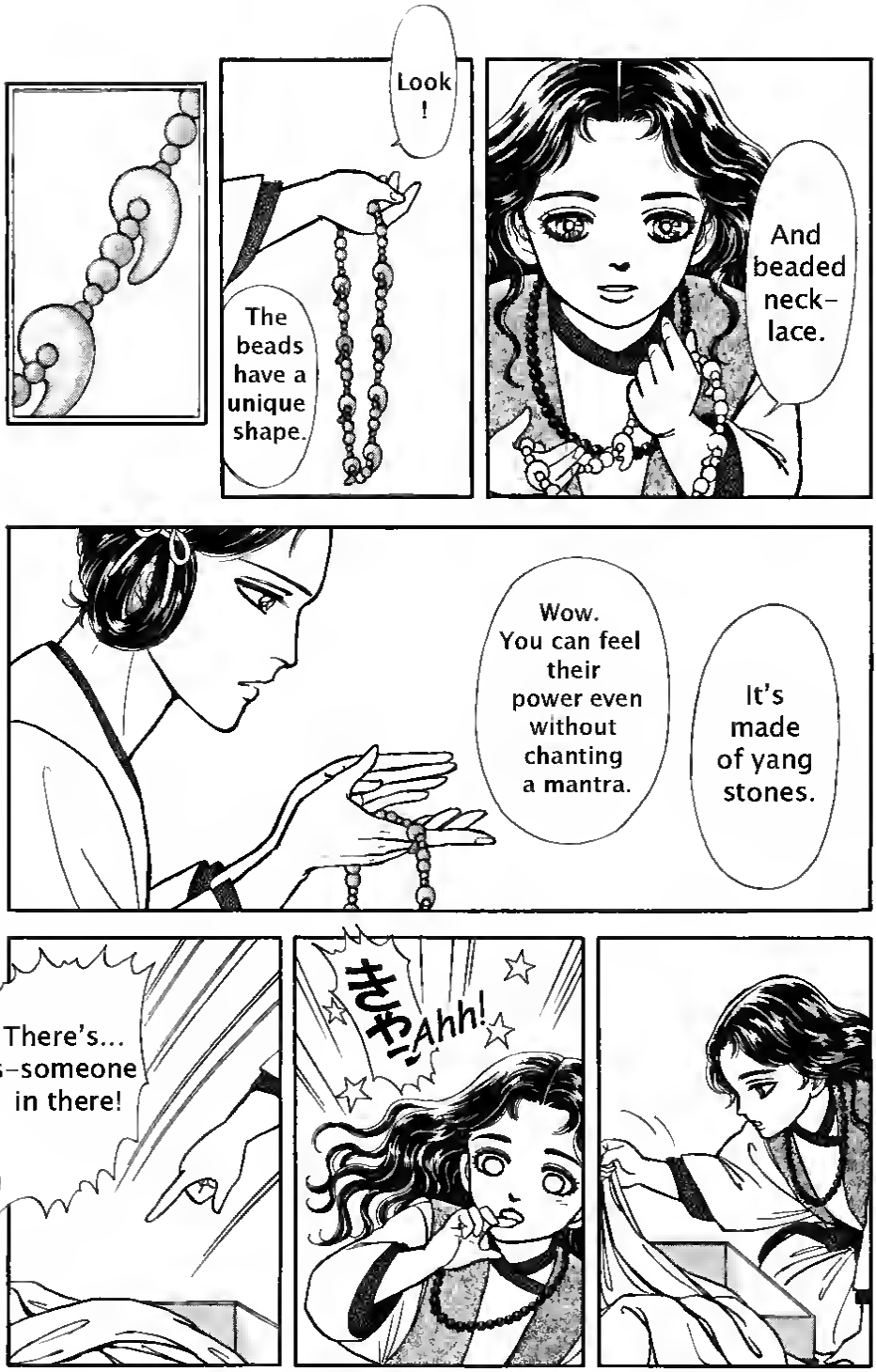
HEHE...
There I go talking about things that can't be changed.
There's an order to assemble. Sounds like the chief has something to tell us.
Katsura
If you want to look at the sacred treasures, this would be a good time.
When there's an order to assemble, the entire army gathers together.
No one will be able to sneak a peek.
All right!

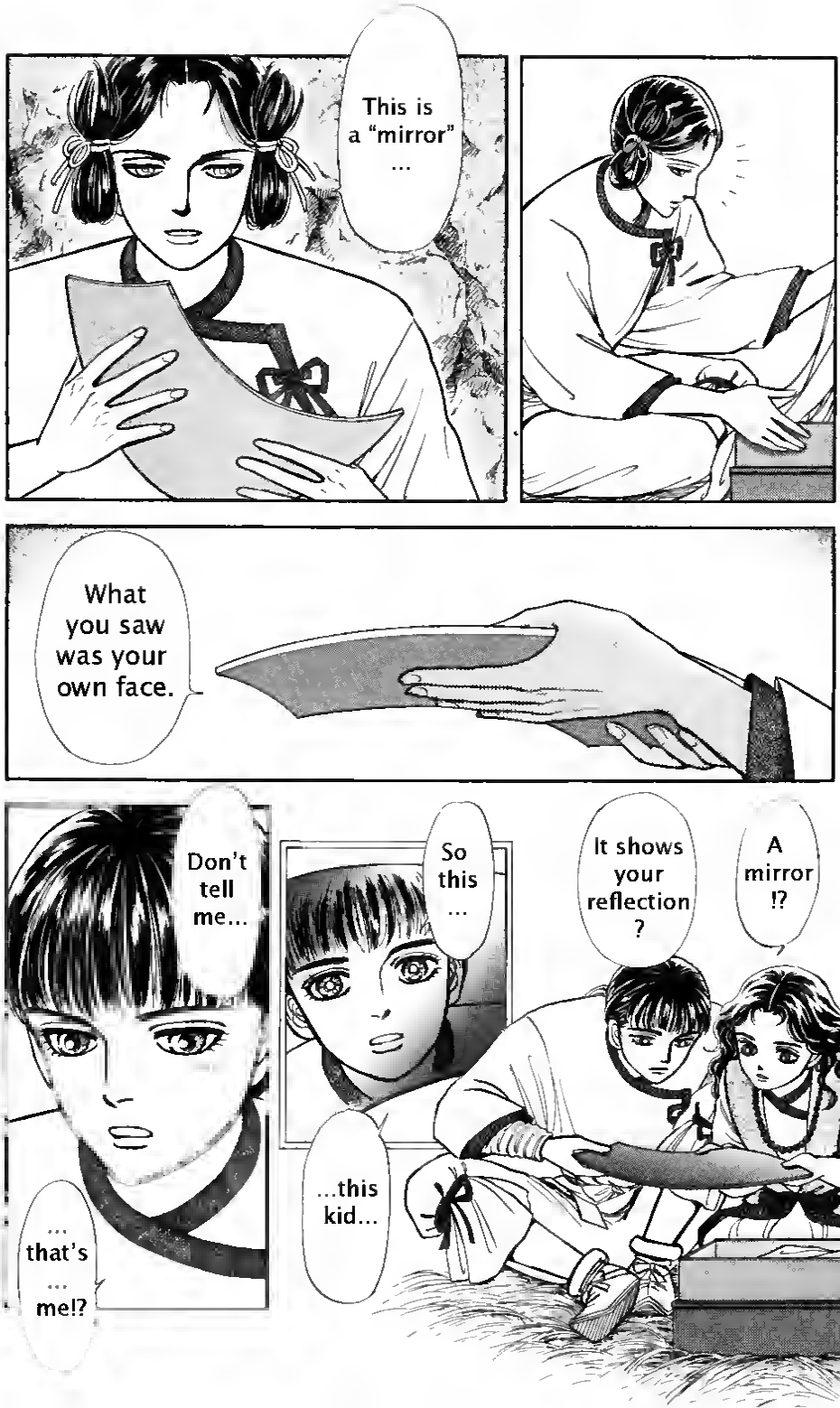

But he was offered up after he died.
... Katsu-ra's brother ...
...that he's still alive...
I got this feeling ...
What's wrong, Toko!? You're staring off into space.
I know. I just got that feeling...
...for some reason ...
Can we, Aohiko?
Anyway, let's take a look at the sacred treassures!

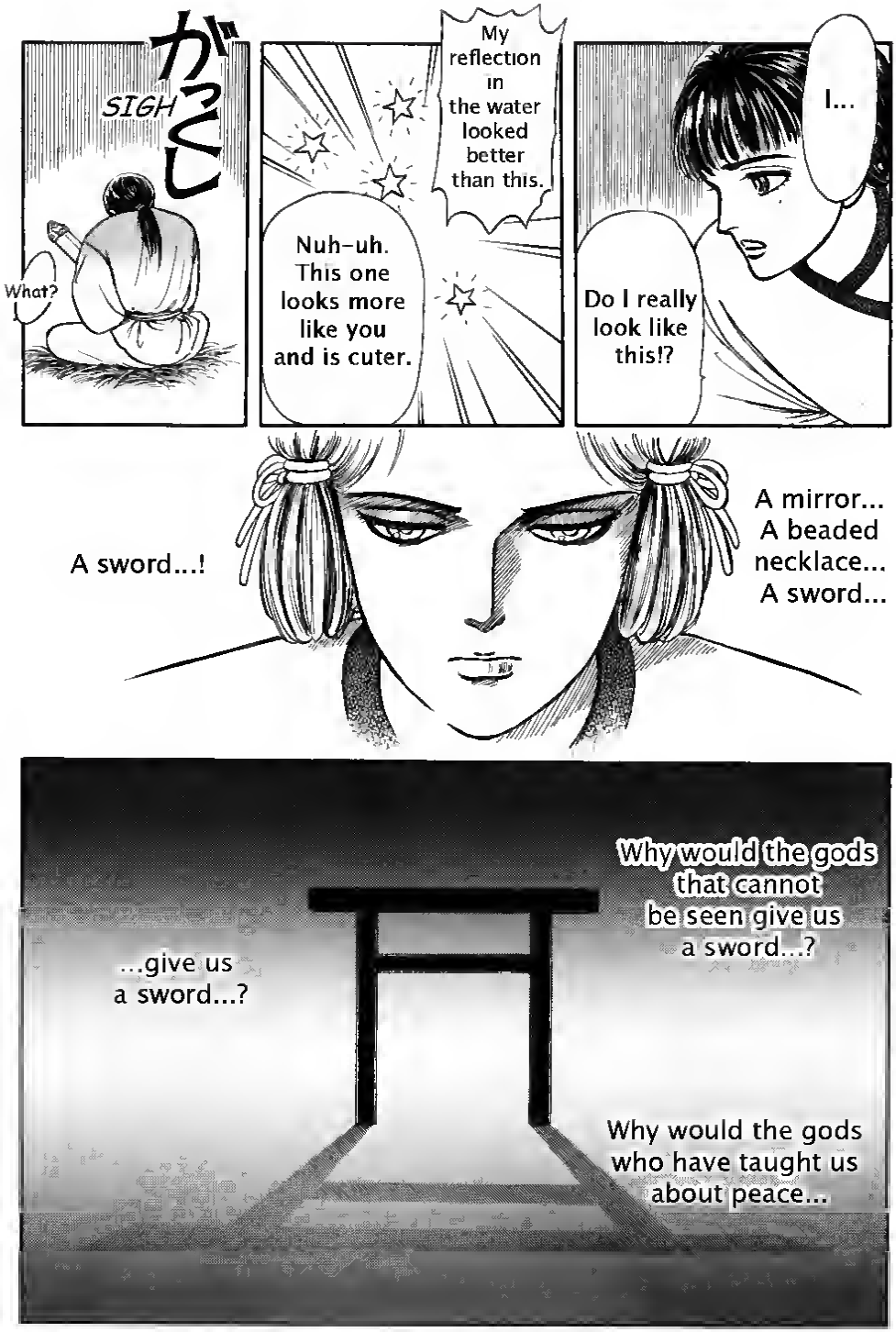
アゆ真◎△ぐ中
ホ◇〃ホ母山○
ホ◇〃ホ母山○
アゆ真◎△ぐ中
ホ◇〃ホ母山○
I like
the mysterious
sound
of mantras...
That time...
The sound
resembles
the way it felt
that time.
ホ◇〃ホ母山○


Flowers!
Flowers!
Flowers!
Berries!
Berries!
Berries!

Wow!
A sword!
A nice one too!
A sword!?


Look!
The beads have a unique shape.
And beaded neck-lace.
Wow. You can feel their power even without chanting a mantra.
It's made of yang stones.
There's... s-someone in there!
きゃ〜Ahh!


This is a "mirror" ...
What you saw was your own face.
Don't tell me...
... that's ... me!?
...this kid...
So this ...
It shows your reflection ?
A mirror !?


SIGH
がっくし
What?
Nuh-uh. This one looks more like you and is cuter.
My reflection in the water looked better than this.
I...
Do I really look like this!?
A mirror... A beaded necklace... A sword...
A sword...!
Why would the gods that cannot be seen give us a sword...?
...give us a sword...?
Why would the gods who have taught us about peace...

To be continued...

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Itihasa 1

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